



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### **Usage guidelines**

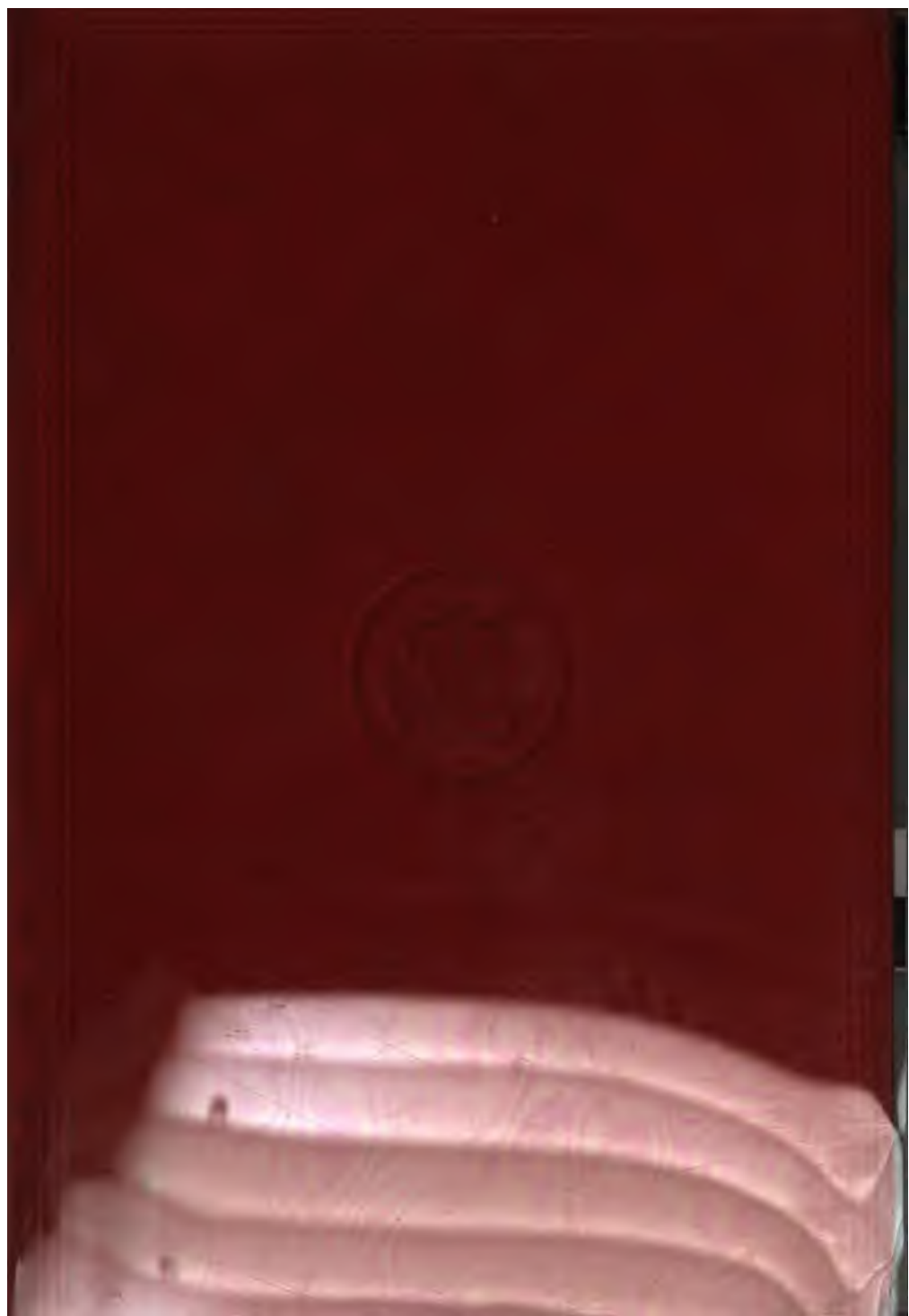
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### **About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





**600056323P**





THE AFGHAN KNIFE.

VOL. III.

LONDON :  
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,  
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

300  
1851  
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON

# THE AFGHAN KNIFE.

BY

ROBERT ARMITAGE STERNDALE, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF

"SEONEE; OR, CAMP LIFE ON THE SATPURA RANGE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, AND RIVINGTON,  
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1879.

*All rights reserved.*]

251. f. 193





## A STROKE OF AN AFGHAN KNIFE.

---

### CHAPTER I.

“WHAT on earth have you been doing, Stanford?” exclaimed his comrades, as he joined them at the mess-table, just as the cheese was being removed.

“I’ve had an adventure,” he replied; “but I won’t say a word about it till I’ve had some beer.”

“Here you are, old fellow,” said one of the company, filling a foaming tumbler from his own bottle. “Here, drain that, and then tell us all about it.”

Paul tossed off the reviving draught, and then recounted how he had missed his way, and ridden up to a reconnoitring party of the enemy; how he had been carried off; and how he had met his old Florentine acquaintance. “And here I am

again, instead of being bowstrung or made a target of, and uncommonly hungry I am."

So saying he vigorously attacked a smoking pie which had just been brought up again.

"Well, I will say that your friend is a gentleman, though he is a *mufsid* (rebel)," said the Major, after a few emphatic puffs at his cheroot.

"He's a very clever fellow, and a most agreeable companion, as I can testify from experience," replied Paul. "He gave me no end of a good dinner in Florence, and had a box at the opera afterwards. He can talk on any subject you like, and is altogether a most polished gentleman, and handsome to boot."

"I am afraid we shall have to hang him some day, nevertheless, if we catch him," said the Colonel, who had hitherto listened in silence. "Such men deserve hanging, for they ought to know better; and it is through their ambitious intrigues that all this misery has been entailed. Did you see aught of the disposition of the rebel forces?"

"No, sir," answered Paul, "we did not go near enough to their camp; he had not

more than a dozen, or maybe sixteen, troopers with him. What rank he holds in the camp I know not."

"I expect we shall astonish them tomorrow."

"My friend the Syed spoke very confidently of the strength of his position."

"Ay, ay, that is all very well. These fellows always think we blunder straight ahead, without conceiving the possibility of a flank movement. Of course we shall make a dash at them here, and may have a bit of stiff fighting; but they will get a surprise before the day is over."

"Good evening, Colonel; how are ye all?"

The speaker was a new-comer in artillery uniform, a handsome, hardy young fellow, bronzed by much exposure.

"Any news, Jones?" exclaimed half a dozen eager voices.

"All a mystery," he whispered, putting on a comic expression, wagging his head gravely, with a finger on his nose.

"General mysterious, chief of staff mysteriouiser, our own boss mysteriouesest. All I know is he's been in an awful gale all day about that howitzer going over the

*Khadd*, and my cutting his new pattern traces to get poor Simmons out from under the horses, where he lay with his leg smashed.”

“Never saw such a sight in my life,” said Paul. I intend to paint a picture of it some day. Dim, grey light of dawn, wild scenery, a battery winding down the pass, with a gloomy precipice on one side, overhanging cliffs on the other; a sharp turn in the road, and crash goes a twenty-four-pounder howitzer, horses, men and all down the gorge.”

“Ay, and a marvellous squeak they had,” replied Jones; “the gun fell on a ledge and stuck, the carriage smashed to bits; but, strange to say, none of the horses were killed, and the only man badly hurt was poor Simmons, and he has both legs broken.”

“That comes of marching in the dark; but how was it that the horses were not killed?”

“Well, you see, it wasn’t a clear drop. The hill sloped down a bit and then came this ledge, so the gun, being heaviest, dragged all after it, and they fell in a heap. Had they gone a bit further, we should

have had to pick up a good many fragments. However, we've got the old gun mounted again as right as a trivet, and she'll speak bonnily to those Pandies to-morrow. But, by the bye, I forgot to say I did hear a rumour as I came along from young Batley, who's on the staff, that the 12th and 17th, and some cavalry and Jumper's battery had received orders to march somewhere at once, but where I can't say; some flank movement, I suppose."

"Ay, there'll be hot work to-morrow; so the sooner we get to bed to prepare for it, the better," said the Major. "Here lads, fill up your glasses. 'Sweethearts and wives,' the old English toast, and may we all be here again to-morrow night to drink it once more."

"Don't let us be dismal over it," cried one of the company after the toast had been drained.

"Cannot some one give us a song. Here, Paddy, you're the boy with the voice, strike up something patriotic with a chorus."

Patrick Conolly, a cheery, devil-me-care sort of fellow, was nothing loth, so he replied,—

“All right, bhoys, mind ye join in the chorus, or maybe they’ll think I’m waking me grandmother. Here goes.”

So he sang a stirring soldiers’ song, and the canvas walls of the mess-tent rang with the chorus,—

Hurra! for queen and country,  
See where the foemen surge,  
Whilst fiery shell and shrapnell  
Shriek forth the warrior’s dirge!

Quoth the Major, “That’s not a very cheerful ditty, all blood and bones, and encouraging on the whole, still there’s a ring about it. Hark!”

See on yon frowning bastion,  
The legions gather fast;  
Then the roar of the grimy cannon,  
And the peal of the bugle’s blast.  
What though the bayonets glimmer  
In the rays of the rising sun,  
And the eye may be dazed at the shimmer  
Of light on each levell’d gun.

And again the chorus burst forth,—

Hurra! for queen and country.

till the camp rang again, and one or two passers-by from other regiments stepped in to listen.

The old Colonel had left the tent before the song, indeed before the Major had given his toast, but now he reappeared again, and stood in the doorway with a kindly, yet somewhat sad expression on his face, as he thought that some of those who were joining in the chorus might, ere the morrow's eve, be amongst those for whom the dirge had been sung.

However, as soon as the song was over, he said,—

“Well, gentlemen, I think you had all better get a nap, for I may tell you that we march at midnight, and you may yet get a couple of hours' sleep.”

“At midnight, Colonel? where are we off to?”

“You will see all in good time. Meanwhile, I am going to roost. Good night.”

In a few minutes the mess-tent was empty, and as Paul turned in, booted and spurred as he was, he could hardly sleep for the excitement, the vague feeling of impending danger, that he experienced.

It was the first time he was going under fire, and the position held by the enemy was so strong that it was likely that there



would be a severe struggle. The refrain of the song he had just heard kept ringing in his ears, and he could not help repeating to himself,—

Whilst fiery shell and shrapnell  
Shriek forth the warrior's dirge.

It was a sound strange to him at present, but on the morrow it might be familiar—it may be, too much so. He hoped not, for Grace's sake; though, if she were dead, it would be a matter of indifference to him whether he fell or not.

Nothing had been heard of Abdul since he left, and Paul feared that not only had his mission proved a failure, but that he himself had lost his life.

Then, thinking of Grace, his thoughts went back to the happy days in Florence, and sleep utterly forsook his eyes. He heard the snoring of his comrades, and made an effort to dismiss his thoughts, but without avail. At last he dropped off in a slumber, and had slept for half an hour or three quarters—it seemed to him five minutes—when he was aroused. There were no trumpet-calls, all was done silently as possible. The men quietly mounted, the

officers took their places; at the word of command they marched out of the slumbering camp into the dark country beyond. It was then that Paul, riding beside the Colonel, heard something of their intended movements.

Seven miles further on was a small, unfrequented ghât, which had been originally the old road, but it had been deserted when the present and more direct highway had been constructed, and had fallen somewhat out of repair. Two engineer officers, who had ridden on reconnoitring the day before, had examined the place, and found it practicable for artillery, though difficult, and of course for the other two arms of the service also.

They were then to make their way on to the plateau by this pass, and to take the enemy in flank.

“But will they be such idiots as to leave the place unguarded?” asked Paul.

“No, they have not done so. The Thakoor of the place close by has been ordered to watch the ghât, but our political agent tells us the man is a shrewd fellow, and is only half-hearted with the rebels, and if he sees we are likely to succeed, he

will prudently retire ; in fact, there is some such arrangement between him and the agent."

"What a treacherous dog ! No wonder my friend the Syed spoke bitterly of his cause, when such men have to be trusted to."

"It is a very good thing for us, Stanford, that it is so ; disunion in India is our great safeguard. As long as a thousand and one jealousies prevent anything like a general combination, so long will it be impossible to overthrow the government. I don't suppose that we are hated by the mass of the people, or even that all the pampered native soldiers now arrayed against us really dislike us. But they have been persuaded against us, and in many cases, against their own wills and convictions. The men we are now going to fight against I do not call rebels, for they have never sworn fealty to us. Their chiefs *are* to blame, for they accepted our rule, and they may be said to have rebelled. The poor fellows who follow the orders of their lords are enemies to us, it is true, but I can hardly look upon them as rebels, to be treated, when caught, to a short shrift and a long rope."

“But surely they understand that they are rebelling against the established government.”

“Nay, they know little, and care less, about it. All the states about here are semi-independent, and the ignorant masses look only to their own chiefs. The East India Company is to them but a name, and the Queen of England a myth. The local chiefs are the embodiment of power in their estimation, and they blindly follow them to the death; but now, poor wretches, they will have a rude awakening to the true state of affairs.”

Colonel Barton was an officer of much Indian experience, and had served with distinction both in civil and military capacities. He had mixed much with natives, and to a naturally observant mind had added a keen desire to fathom their habits and ways of thinking. He formed a contrast therefore to many officers of his day, who had very little notion of native character beyond the sepoy's of their own regiments; and what they did gather from their own men was but a superficial and imperfect acquaintance.

His opinion, therefore, was of the highest

value, and none of his actions were sullied by that blind haste which led so many of our officers to commit acts which can never be thought of without regret and disapproval. He was stern where severity was needed, and just but clement whenever there was room for indulgence, and wisdom in the exercise of it. He was not one who condemned every prisoner indiscriminately to the rope. Would that there had been fewer who did so !

Barton's horse was a newly raised regiment, but it had already done excellent service, and there was the utmost cordiality between men and officers. When Paul was invited by the Colonel to attach himself to the corps, he accepted with pleasure, for during the few days the column halted at Nowair, he was greatly taken with Colonel Barton's manner.

After an hour's march the cavalry came up to the infantry and artillery, which had started a little earlier. A regiment of infantry led. The advanced guard was piloted by a rough-looking native, who, it was secretly rumoured, had been supplied by the Thakoor whose ghât they were to ascend.

After awhile the road became more irregular, and dense brushwood jungle hemmed it in on either side.

"We are about to mount the ghât," remarked Colonel Barton, dexterously catching a fire-fly as it flitted past. Opening his watch he let the insect crawl across the dial, and by its fitful gleams he read the time—a quarter to two.

"We shall be on the plateau before daylight, if we go on in this manner, and this would be foolhardy work, had we not traitors to deal with."

"But I suppose we do not implicitly trust this man," asked Paul.

"No, that we do not. I suspect we shall halt soon, and wait for daylight; then the infantry will go first, throwing out advanced guards and flankers, and then will follow the artillery, and we shall bring up the rear, for we are useless fellows in such cases as these, although I hope we shall do something when we get out on the open."

"They will have a job with the artillery here, for the road is more like an old watercourse."

"Yes, it is not thoroughly Macadam-

ized, it is true, but they have got two elephants to help them over the worst parts."

As Colonel Barton had predicted, an aide-de-camp came riding up with a message from the Brigadier, ordering them to halt and await the dawn.

Accordingly they dismounted.

As the time approached for the break of dawn, the Brigadier ordered rations of biscuit and hot coffee to be served out to the Europeans, the natives taking care of themselves with parched rice and grain, and such things as they could eat without cooking.

"Old Saunders is determined not to fall into the mistake made by those fellows down country," remarked the doctor of Barton's horse, as he stirred a cup of hot chocolate.

"What mistake was that?" asked Paul.

"Why, sending out their men to fight without giving them a feed first—a fatal mistake with the British soldier—natives can go longer without food, they'll chew a handful of parched peas, or bolt a mass of meal worked up with water, and take a drink from a muddy brook, and go on for hours; but the Englishman will succumb under

great heat, if he be not fortified. Yet here's Barton, an exception to the rule; I've known him go without food or drink for twenty-four hours, working hard in the sun."

"You forget the *chabeni*, doctor," remarked the person alluded to.

"Oh, ay, yes! I remember, you had a handful of parched peas which one of your men gave you, out of an awfully greasy old skull-cap."

"One cannot be particular, when one is starving," replied the Colonel, "but I am uncommonly glad our men have had food and rest before the day's work; the Europeans especially, for I was in one muddle they made some time ago and I have no wish to see another, but for my Sowars the Europeans would have been annihilated. They were in retreat, quite demoralized, and dropping by dozens with sunstroke, and all because they were sent out to fight unfed."

"Who was to blame?" asked Paul.

"Oh, poor fellow, we have let his memory off easy; 'twas but an error of judgment, though a grave one, for he had ample time, as much as we have now, to give



his men breakfast, but he was a brave soldier, first to attack, last to retreat, and he fell shot through the head. However, there is the morning star, dawn will soon break, and then we must be on the move again."

In a short time ashy grey streaks began to broaden in the east, and the camp was once more astir.

The road grew more precipitous, and was in places so narrow and uneven, that it was doubtful whether the artillery would get up.

Paul rode on a bit, to see how the elephants worked, and he was greatly interested in the sagacity shown by the huge animals in removing fallen trees, pulling down overhanging branches, and helping up the guns. One elephant went ahead to clear the way, the other remained behind. In one part a wheel of a howitzer got jammed in a deep hole, and the horses and men were powerless to extricate it; the elephant in the rear—a powerful tusker—was brought up to assist. Finding that butting at the gun with his forehead was of no avail, he quietly coiled his trunk round the axle and lifted the wheel right out of the hole.

The sun was well up before they reached the top of the ghât, and as yet the enemy had made no sign. A few men had been seen by our scouts, but they withdrew without molestation, for the Brigadier had given strict orders that not a shot was to be fired unless the enemy attacked first.

But they soon heard the distant roll of musketry, the grating rattle of rifles, and the thunder of big guns, and this made them anxious to press on. The action at the ghât had commenced.

"And aren't those Pandies getting fits," exclaimed Paddy Conolly. "Ach! we'll be late intoirely. I wish these infantry boys were four-futted, and we could trot 'em on a bit. I'd give a month's pay to have a cut at that old blaguard of a Subahdar of the 77."

"Ay," said Paul, with a stern set face, "I'd give that and a sight more to be face to face with that scoundrel; however, I hope we shall account for some of his gang before nightfall."

In the course of an hour the sounds of battle came far more distinctly than before, for they had surmounted a swell in the ground and could see the distant

smoke of the batteries and the puff of the shells as they burst. There was a fine top of mango-trees by the road side, and the Brigadier halted his small force for a few minutes, as a stream of water flowed handy.

“Ten minutes of delay will not much matter,” said he, “and a few biscuits may save me many a good man.”

So rations and a tot apiece were served out to all who would take it, and on they marched again, munching as they went.

The General commanding, had attacked the enemy's position at daybreak, intending to get as much as possible of the fighting over in the cool of the morning. But the task was not an easy one. The enemy's forces were well disposed and they fought with determination. Twice the assault failed with heavy losses, and, emboldened by their apparent success, the rebels advanced with the intention of sweeping the British before them. The General, divining their intent, drew his forces back, luring them on, and then attacking again in his turn drove them back in disorder to the ghât. The hill-sides became the scene of a hard struggle, and an attempt was

made to rally his men by the Nawab which had nearly proved successful, when the sounds of a fresh cannonade on the summit of the plateau decided the rout. From mouth to mouth rang the cry, "Run! run! we are surrounded! we are all dead men, run!" The Nawab with a bitter oath shot down one of the most frantic of his followers, and urged them to stand their ground; if they were out-flanked they had still an ample force above the ghât, but they were too terror-stricken to listen, and just then a shell, falling into their midst, burst, and scattered death around. The survivors fled, leaving their chief standing unhurt and undismayed, with a look of Eblis, the Prince of Evil, on his handsome face.

"May the curses of Allah fall on these treacherous and coward hearts, and make the fires of Jehannum seventy times hotter for them."

So saying, he shook his clenched fist in the air and rushed after his flying men with the victorious cheers of the British ringing in his ears.

The detached column had arrived at a happy moment. The victorious onslaught

of the rebels had received a check, and it was doubtful whether they could hold the pass. The sepoys of the 77th, had taken no part in the forward movement. Bakr Mahomed had no notion of subordinating himself entirely to the Nawab, so he refused to advance with the rest, urging as an excuse that the camp should be held against a flank movement of the enemy, and in so much he was right, though he never thought that his words would come true. His only idea was, to let his rival measure his strength with the British lion, and then if he fell defeated, he would make good his retreat, and if he were victorious, he would come in at the tail end and claim a victor's share.

“He's got hard teeth, let him crack the flints first,” was his remark, as he saw the Nawab lead on his men.

But the aspect of affairs soon changed as some friendly villagers came in, breathless from running, with the report that the dreaded *gara log* were close at hand.

Very blank indeed was the visage of the Subahdar Bakr Mahomed, and the blankness was reflected in the countenances of many of his men, for they felt that Nemesis

was at hand, and after what they had done they could expect but little quarter. However, they had but little time for consideration as the advanced guard of the column came in sight.

With the desperation felt by men who fight with a halter round their necks they prepared to resist. They had a heavier force of guns than their enemy, and reckoning all the irregular levies of the neighbouring Thakoors they mustered more men. But the action was short and decisive. The panic-stricken fugitives from the ghât came pouring up, demoralizing, instead of strengthening the defenders of the flank attack.

The cry that they were surrounded, rang through the field, and as the English artillery fire grew hotter, and the sunbeams played on the bayonets of the advancing columns, band after band broke and fled across country.

The 77th made a half-hearted stand, but finally broke and fled too.

The rout was complete.

The British artillery limbered up and sped after the fugitives rounding and pouring in a hailstorm of grape on every

attempt to re-form. Barton's horse was well to the front confining their attentions chiefly to the 77th.

Bakr Mahomed flung himself from his horse, on which he formed too conspicuous an object, and mingled with the flying crowd. Only one determined attempt was made to rally. Animated by the example and urged by the voices of some of the native officers who were made of better stuff than the Subahdar, a portion of the regiment hurriedly threw themselves into square, just as the hostile cavalry came up. But the resistance was in vain. Overpowered by the shock, they broke in the utmost confusion, and scattered over the place, some running wildly, and submitting to be cut down like sheep, others fighting with the savage tenacity of the wild cat. There were little brilliant combats going on over the field which was thickly strewn with the red coats of the sepoy.

One powerful Havildar had defied several of the troopers of Barton's horse, who had attacked him in turn; his bayonet practice had proved superior to their swordsmanship. At last they appealed to Pat Conolly who was their adjutant.

Pat laughed as he again drew his sword which he had just sheathed and said, "Well I suppose I must tackle him, or else these fellows will think I'm afraid, but it's not meself that likes going in at a man when he's down on his luck. But he's a murderin villian after all. So here, Pandy! look out for yerself, me bhoy!"

The Havildar turned savagely on his new assailant, who came at him at a gallop. Up went the sword-arm and the bright blade flashed like a streak of lightning in the sun. The glittering bayonet was poised to catch the descending blow, when with a turn of the wrist the swordsman dropped his point, and made a rapid downward thrust; as the dust thrown up by his horse's hoofs blew away, a red heap was lying on the plain, whilst ringing cheers arose from the troopers.

Pat returned hot and flushed; as he raised his helmet to wipe his streaming brow, he exclaimed, "Bah! 'twas a dhirty business, and no glory in it. I'm just ashamed of meself, only the bhoys wouldn't have understood me if I'd refused."


"Paddy has to keep up his reputation as the *maître-d'armes* of the regiment," re-



marked Colonel Barton to Paul, who was having his saddle girthed on to a dead trooper's horse, his own having been shot under him.

Paul had had his maiden brush too, and had come out scatheless, though horseless. Whilst in pursuit of two sepoys, the last man suddenly turned and fired at him, bringing down his horse, and the point of his sword running into the rocky soil snapped the blade in two. Paul had barely extricated himself from the saddle when the Pandy was on him, and pressed him rather hard, and the second man also turned to help his comrade. Paul hurriedly drew his revolver, and shot his assailant dead. Still there remained the other man, a powerful, broad-chested Rajpoot, who came on with a shout. Paul took a steady aim and shot him full in the chest, the man staggered, but shouting, "*Haribol! Haribol!*" came on—another shot—another stagger, still he came on, though the *Haribol* had somewhat of a husky roar in it. Again a third shot, and hurling his musket at his foe he fell prone on the earth, with his large nervous hands convulsively clutching the stones.

By nightfall the victory was complete, and the whole British force was encamped on the plateau. The prisoners were few in number, for little quarter had been given, but those who were taken alive were kept under strict guard. Bound hand and foot they presented a sorry spectacle as they squatted in a heap shivering in the chilly night air. But there was one man there whose anguish of mind and body was far keener than that of his comrades; groaning under the torture of a frightful gash in his back, stripped of his gaudy uniform and dreading with the most abject terror the fate that inevitably awaited him in the morning, cowered the once boastful, haughty Subahdar Bakr Mahomed. All his schemes of aggrandizement had vanished like a dream, whilst the shrieks and groans of his victims rose against him in the silent night. Nor was this all, for he had to bear the execrations of the unfortunate men who were taken with him. He was the author of all the evil that had happened to them. Now they were in the hands of the Sirkar again, not as servants faithful to their salt, but as rebels and murderers doomed to



a degrading death. Had their arms been free, they would have throttled him on the spot.

Up to midnight there was a council, or rather court-martial in the General's tent, and sentence of death was passed.

In the early morning a guard marched up to the banyan-tree, under which the prisoners had been tethered. The General and his staff and many other officers rode up, Paul amongst the number. Some of the camp-sweepers came up with coils of rope.

The Brahmins shuddered as they saw these preparations, whilst Bakr Mahomed grovelled in the dust.

The General addressed the unhappy men in a few words.

They had been faithless to their salt, they had not only turned against those who had been kind to them, but they had most foully murdered them, and now they must expiate their crimes by death.

A fine soldierly-looking man amongst the prisoners attempted to step forward to speak. As he was being restrained, the General said,—

“Nay, let him have his say.”

So the man, unable to salute on account of his fetters, drew himself up to attention, and spoke in a clear voice.

“General Sahib, we deserve to die. I had eaten the Sirkar’s salt for twenty years, I have fought in many fields, look for yourself at the scar on my breast, one on my forehead, and one on my thigh. These tell how I fought. I wore medals on my breast, I was promoted from the ranks, to Havildar, for good conduct. The Sirkar was good to us, and we were happy, but evil men came amongst us, they persuaded us that our caste was to be destroyed, and there was reason to believe it, for else what were the new cartridges for? and why were we sworn to go across the Black water? So we listened and a wind came over us and took away our senses, and that man, that Subahdar Bakr Mahomed was the cause of our regiment mutinying. We did not wish to go, but he and his men persuaded us. We shot the Colonel Sahib and the other officers on parade, and then we thought there would be no forgiveness for us, so we were driven into it, but I swear on Ganges water, on a cow, on my son’s head, any oath the Sahib

likes, that I never lifted a hand against one of the Sahibs. The men here will testify that Bakr Mahomed struck me with his sword, and degraded me to the ranks again, because I refused to fire on the English gentlemen and ladies."

"It is true, it is true," responded the captives.

"I have said my say. I have no wish to live, but we have all one petition to make, and that is, if we are to be hung, let us see that scoundrel, Bakr Mahomed, hung first, and then we will submit to our fate."

"Well, I think this fellow deserves some consideration," said the General; "here, hang that rascal of a Subahdar first."

"Oh, mercy! mercy!" shrieked the wretched man, as he was seized and half-dragged, half-carried to a low horizontal branch of the tree whereon had been attached an ominous row of nooses. A palki had been brought, and on the roof of this the culprit was hoisted. A noose was thrown over him and tightened. The palki was swung from under him, and the massacre of Amānpur was avenged.

The Havildar looked at the struggles of his late chief with a grim satisfaction,

and then turning to his comrades said, "Come, brothers, it is our turn now."

"Hold for a minute," said the General: "Havildar, you shall be disposed of in a different manner. You have rebelled and the punishment is death, but you have been a brave man and you have not taken part in these murders. You shall therefore have a brave man's death, you shall be blown from a gun."

The sepoy's eye flashed with pleasure, as he knew he should be saved from the degrading touch of the sweepers, and he shouted with energy, "Sirkar Bahadoor ki jai!" or Victory to the Government!

"Take him away," said the General; "it is no use letting him see his comrades suffer; send him down to Smith's battery."

Let us not dwell further on the unpleasant details of the execution of the unfortunate men who remained, not one of whom but envied the Havildar. The same procedure was followed as in the Subahdar's case, only that four or five men at a time were mounted on the palki which served as a platform and drop, and then the guard marched away, leaving the tree alone with its ghastly burden. A little later, whilst yet

the camp was on the move on the way to Asālgurh another tragedy was being enacted. The General was not present, but under his orders a battery of artillery had been drawn up, flanked by two regiments of cavalry, the infantry was already on the march. A gun was advanced to the front, and the Havildar brought forward. There was hardly an Englishman there who did not feel some pity and admiration for the man. The natives were callous and looked on apathetically, except in so far as they regarded the affair as a military spectacle. The sepoy begged that he might be unfettered, and the boon was granted. He marched up with undaunted mien to the gun, and throwing his arms round it kissed it, then saluting the officer in command he placed his back against the muzzle and held back his arms to be tied to the wheels.

“Sirkar Angrese Bahadoor ki jai ! Victory to the British Government !” he shouted once more, at the next moment he was blown to atoms. And so ended a life of bravery and loyal devotion, ruined at the last by misrepresentation, and perverted sentiment.

## CHAPTER II.

ASALGUEH had been besieged for two days, the Nawab having withdrawn there, with the remnant of his forces. He had reached the place after hard riding, on the very night of Grace's escape, and it was partly his intention to send her off at once to some other place of security, even if he did not accompany her. He therefore, made his way at once to her apartment, and not finding the old woman in charge, he walked unannounced into the room. What was his astonishment to find the place empty! A quick glance at the window told him the truth, and then he was startled by a low moan. Turning rapidly at the sound, he discovered the old woman, who had been left gagged and bound by Jorawur.

Hastily calling his attendants, the prisoner was released, and then with



voluble energy she detailed the circumstances of the escape.

The Nawab gnashed his teeth with rage, and he would have followed the fugitives at once, but that his horses were knocked up with a sixty-mile journey, and he also felt in no condition for further exertion, but he sent for Beni Sing, who, with his men, were quartered in the fort, and ordered him to follow up the fugitives, promising him a large reward if he succeeded in recapturing them. The British forces could not be before the fort till the third day, so there might yet be time. The few troopers who had remained behind in Asālgurh, were also sent on the track.

Beni Sing accepted the task with alacrity, for life in Asālgurh had been uncommonly stupid of late.

According to the old woman, the fugitives had not had more than two hours' start, so all might yet be retrieved.

He started from the garden under the window, and tracked them to the spot at which the horses had been tethered.

"They have escaped us," said Jeswunt, "how can we overtake horses?"

"Nay, Jeswunt Bhai, I am not so sure

about these horses. If people had intended to fly on horseback, would they have left fodder and litter lying about? Nay, these horses are but a blind, let the Sowars follow their track, but let us look further on; see here are footprints in this ploughed field, they have crossed here, you may be sure. Come on, brothers, and you Khan Sahib," he continued addressing the leader of the horsemen, "you had better gallop down that road in case they have gone off in that direction."

We know with what result Beni Sing conducted his quest, let us, therefore, follow the troopers.

They set off at a furious pace in the direction of Sherghati, for they guessed the fugitives would make for that place, but mile after mile passed without their coming across any sign; at last they neared the Kalu Nuddi, and found it in flood, and unfordable, so they halted and rested themselves and their horses till day-break, half-inclined to curse the Nawab for sending them on such a wild-goose chase.

Still the Syed, they knew, was generous, and had he not promised a large reward?

Fate was, however, against them; the

fugitives, if they took this road, must have crossed the river before it flooded, for in these hilly tracts the torrents swell with inconceivable rapidity after rain in the hills. At daybreak they began to retrace their steps, disgusted with their want of luck.

Suddenly as they passed a copse, not far from the road, they heard the shrill neigh of a horse.

Ah, ha! here was a clue. Wheeling round they made for the place, when Abdul Rakim, knowing he would be surrounded, broke from his place of concealment, and rushed off across country, followed by the others like a pack of hounds in full cry.

Native horsemen, however, are not good at cross country work, and in spite of much spurring and craning, one by one they gradually dropped astern.

The *duffadur*, or leader of the band, was, however, better mounted than the others, and he kept up with the flying youth, and imperceptibly decreased his distance: he was not a brave man, though he was a great boaster, and he congratulated himself on an easy victory, for apparently this boy to whom he was

giving chase had no arms, and he pictured to himself his riding back with the captive's head, as an offering to the Nawab, who would give him a troop, and make him a Ressaldar, so he did not mind leaving his comrades behind, but pressed on savagely.

The two were now together, the rest had fallen far in the rear. Abdul cast a look behind, his horse was failing; the *duffadur* spurred on with a shout, and drawing his bright *tulwar*, waved it over his head, as he urged on his steed.

The youth turned in his saddle, and raised his hand.

There was something bright in it, on which the rays of the rising sun glinted, the *duffadur* felt a qualm and a sudden dread of impending danger come over him. He repented his rashness, and his impulse was to draw his rein, but it was too late! There was a flash, a sharp report, and the next moment a riderless horse was scouring the plain.

Paul's parting gift, the pistol, had till then lain at the bottom of the mendicant's wallet, but Abdul remembered it, and looked to its loading, when he found men on his track.

He rode on rapidly, although his horse was showing signs of distress, for his pursuers were still behind. The nag was a sorry one;—how he longed for his vicious, powerful Katthiawar, who would have carried him with ease far away, out of the clutches of his foes, as he urged on his drooping steed, but in vain; after a few more miles, the horse dropped on the field, and his rider had to struggle on afoot.

He was not followed.

The pursuers came only as far as the dead body of their leader, and having a wholesome dread of fire-arms, and thinking they had done enough for once in their lives, they agreed to retire. Were not their horses knocked up? had not the fugitive escaped, Allah knew where? If he had only stayed to fight, they would have given a good account of him, but he fled like a bird before the hawk.

So they arranged to carry back the dead *duffadur*, and retired.

That is to say, they squatted there, making excuses for themselves, and boasting of what they might have done, whilst one of their number rode into a neighbour-

ing village, to impress men to carry home the body of their chief.

So Abdul went on he knew not whither, the country was all strange to him, he wanted to get into the Nawab Eusuf Khan's territory, but in which direction it lay he knew not. He walked on, hoping to meet with some one who would direct him.

He had got into a country lane with hedges of cactus and milk-bush on either side, evidences of a village close at hand, and he was considering what story he should make up when he entered, to account for his wandering about alone; for though he was partly in his mendicant dress, he had left his *sitar* behind, and that had been his chief passport to the village folk hitherto.

However, his cogitations were rudely broken by the sound of approaching horses, and before he could hide himself, the advanced guard of a troop of regular cavalry came round a bend in the road.

There was no use in flying, and Abdul saw at a glance that the forces were British, the light French grey and silver of the Light Cavalry of the Madras Army.

The Commander of the troop was one Teddy O'Hallaran, well-known for his disposition to leap first and look after.

Woe betide the luckless native who fell into his hand; hang first and try, if you like, after, was his plan, and as he did not know a word of any language save his own, his victim protested in vain.

There used to be a story told of Teddy, in camp, which would have made Exeter Hall shiver with indignant horror, and properly so too, though there was a comic element in it, could one but divest it of its atrocity.

Tableau, early dawn, enter Teddy's Madras servant.

"Please, masta, how am masta's bed go this mornin, and masta's boxes, sar?"

"O'Hallaran.—How did they come, ye senseless Omadhaun? can't they go the same way?"

"That way, oh yis, sar, that bery good way, with cot-coolies, but no cot-coolies to-day, sar."

"Why? where are they?"

"Masta gone hang 'em all."

"What d'ye mean?"

“I mean those four men masta catchin outside camp yesterday, those masta’s cot-coolies, they tellin that word to masta, but he not understand, he makin hung all on tree, now cannot get any more cot-coolie here, sar.”

Such was the man into whose clutches Abdul fell.

“Ah! ah!” he exclaimed, eyeing him sternly, “I think we’ve got food for the gallows here, one of those wandering fakir fellows. Here, Gora Wulla,” turning to his groom, “just hitch your halter round yon branch, and put this fellow on horse-back, we’ll give him a ride for once in his life.”

Abdul gave a fearless look at the speaker, and then when he ended, said in perfectly good English,—

“I think, sir, it would be better to make a few inquiries of me, before hanging me at once.”

O’Hallaran stared at him, and then burst out into a laugh.

“Ach! here’s a go. Are ye a masquerading Eurasian, or who are ye? but be the powers! if ye can’t give a good account of yourself, I’ll hang ye yet, my lad.”



Abdul drew the revolver from his wallet, and opening the cap-box in the butt, took out Paul's paper, and handed it the officer, who exclaimed,—

“ Paul Stanford ! a great friend of mine, and a thorough good fellow to boot. So you're his man, are you ; well bedad ! you've had a narrow squeak, my boy ; but now I look at you, I rather like your looks. Let's see that pistol of yours ; why here's a fresh barrel let off ; have you had to use it this morning ? ”

Abdul related how he had been chased, and had knocked over his pursuer, on which O'Hallaran looked at him approvingly.

“ You're not bad stuff. I wish we could mount you, and ye must get that toggery off soon, or I'll be forgetting meself, and hanging ye offhand in a fit of absence.”

As they marched on, Abdul keeping up on foot, they descried in the distance a horse grazing. As it was accoutred Abdul guessed it to be the *duffadur's*, on which O'Hallaran detached a couple of troopers to try and catch it ; they were successful, and returned with it, so that Abdul found himself mounted on his late foeman's charger.

The next day, they joined the main body

of the British force, and Paul Stanford was delighted to meet with his follower again. It was more like the meeting of two brothers, than that of master and man, of European and Native. Paul eagerly led him aside and inquired for news of Grace, and a weight was lifted off his mind, when he heard that her escape had been successfully accomplished.

They little knew that both the girls had been again captured.

Paul felt as though he had been relieved of a hideous nightmare. The nearer they approached Asalgurh, the more nervous and apprehensive he became, as though he dreaded the disclosure of some dreadful tragedy which was to blight his whole existence. He had passed the time, during Abdul's absence, in a state of feverish excitement, and the suspense and anxiety had so told on him, that Abdul's first exclamation was, "How worn and thin you have become!"

This was really what the boy thought, and not the usual form of speech of the Native, who thinks it unlucky to compliment you on your good looks, lest evil should befall you.

Paul had fretted in inactivity, whilst his young companion had been kept up by the excitement of adventure.

O'Hallaran, when he met Abdul in the afternoon arrayed in a neat uniform, exclaimed,—


“Ach, now you look like a broth of a boy. I niver could cast an eye on you before without me fingers itching to hang you.”

The next day they were to attack Asāl-gurh. The enemy made one more determined stand before the place, but were routed with great loss, and fled in all directions, the main body under the Nawab retreating into the fort.

The action, which commenced at daybreak, lasted till near noon, and ere sunset the British forces were in position before the fort.

Paul looked with interest at the place when Abdul pointed out the little building where Grace had been confined, and the window out of which she had been lowered.

As soon as the place was taken, he would have rushed off to Sherghati; he longed to go, but he felt himself bound to stick by his adopted regiment for this one fight, and he knew Grace was safe with her father.



He also had a sort of longing to meet the Syed once in open fight, that he might pay him off for his rascality, for Paul's fury was unbounded when he understood that the Nawab and his quondam friend of the Trattoria della Luna, were one and the same.

No doubt the Syed had acted generously towards him when he held him prisoner, but then neither of the two men knew in what way each was concerned with Grace, otherwise Paul might hardly have been able to restrain himself, and the Nawab would, in all probability, have put his prisoner to death.

Paul felt this, and considered that his debt of gratitude was cancelled, and had he met the Syed on the field, he would have singled him out with avidity.

The reduction of the fort was merely a question of time, and the engineers declared a very short time would suffice; the lower works were massive, and stood some pounding, but the buildings within the walls, the Shish Mahal, the Zenana, and others, crumbled like pie-crust, as the heavy balls and shells went crashing through them.

One more night's bombardment, and the place would no longer be tenable.

Within the fort all was anarchy and confusion. The Nawab and the Rani had another stormy meeting, in which the Syed informed her that there was no longer any hope, but that he should retreat from one of the posterns, under cover of the night, and offered to escort her if she chose to fly.

The haughty Rajpoot told him that the princesses of her race knew how to die, but not how to turn their backs on the foe, but for him it was different. Asālgurh was not his, he could leave it without a pang, and if he wished for a petticoat and shawl, she would place some of hers at his disposal. With this parting sneer she left him.

The Rani then sent for her Diwan, and questioned him as to the forces at her disposal, and their feeling towards her.

The old man gave her the details, and declared there was not a man who would not die for her.

The Rani smiled with a bitter smile, her handsome face was stern, and her eyes had a wild glitter almost of madness in them.

“Listen,” said she, “whilst I unfold my plans, and then go and carry out my orders.”

The old man listened, and then casting himself at her feet, begged she would reconsider her decision, but she was firm, and in still more peremptory tones, ordered him to prepare at once. He went out wringing his hands, whilst his mistress retired into her apartments on the ground floor, all the other rooms being shattered and uninhabitable from the bombardment.

That night the British camp was attacked by a sortie from the fort.

Paul sprang from his cot as the trumpets sounded the alarm.

There was moonlight, almost as bright as day, and the masses of the enemy looked in the distance, to all appearance, in greater numbers than they really were.

The attack was futile, and the rebels were driven back, but a body of cavalry shot forth from amongst them, and charged down upon the British camp directly in front of Barton's horse.

The regiment was prepared, and, moving forward, the Colonel gave the order to charge, and in a few minutes, the opposing horsemen were mixed in deadly combat. The enemy fought with determination, their leader was but a youth apparently,

but he came on with the savageness of a panther, and was followed closely by the bravest of his troop, who seemed to devote their energies to guarding him rather than to protecting themselves. Pat Conolly had as usual been one of the first in the fray, and Paul was close alongside.

The former, seeing that the youth was the leader of the troop, made for him, and was immediately attacked by the body-guard. Nothing but his coolness and great skill with his weapon could have saved him, and he cleaved his way to where the youth was. He wanted, if possible, to wound him, and drag him from his saddle, and calling to Paul to tackle some of those about him, he dashed at the boy, but he was so beset by those around, that he failed in his object.

The youth, nothing daunted, came at him savagely, and as Conolly got within sword's length of him, an old Sowar dashed in between, and received the point of the Englishman's sword; as he fell, the young rebel leader made a cut at Conolly, which nearly clove his helmet, and the next moment he himself was cut down by a trooper. A wild cry of despair burst from

the rebel horsemen, as they broke and fled on the death of their chief, and the contest was over.

They were pursued nearly to the gates of the fort, and on returning, the Colonel to whom Conolly had been relating the incident, gave orders that the body of the brave boy should be searched for. It was soon found lying amid a pile of corpses.

It was that of a very handsome, almost effeminate-looking youth, but with a fierce look on the rigid features, clenched teeth, and knitted brows, not even relaxed by the icy hand of death.

The doctor came and looked at it. "This is no man," said he; "this is a woman."

And so it was, the body, gashed and mutilated, was that of a handsome, though determined looking woman.

When morning broke and brought with it the surrender of the fort, they heard that the sortie of the previous evening had been headed by the Rani in person, dressed in male attire. That cold, lifeless form with the set sneer, clenched teeth, and knitted brow, was once the beautiful, proud Rani of Asālgurh, a true princess of her



haughty race, who had followed to the death the traditions of her family.

“Bedad, Stanford,” said Conolly, as they walked away together. “I’m glad *I* didn’t cut her down, it would have haunted me all my life if I’d killed a woman. But who’d have thought that little tigress had so much spirit in her? I’ll keep this helmet as a curiosity ; it was only the *puggari* that saved my brain.”

## CHAPTER III.

WHEN the fort surrendered, there were only about a hundred men in it, who were taken prisoners; and these were bound and confined in one of the courtyards, pending trial.

Paul, led by Abdul, instantly sought the rooms occupied by Grace, for both the young men were anxious to see the place where their betrothed had been imprisoned. The old woman was still there, and in great terror of the British soldiers, who, she felt convinced, would massacre all who came in their way, but Abdul reassured her, and when she was somewhat calmed, she led the way into the rooms.

Paul was struck with astonishment as he beheld the piano, and books, and the drawings, and his own parting gift of the Madonna. The Nawab, though a ruffian, was civilized, and apparently Grace had

been well treated, and for this Paul felt another small *per contra* of gratitude to add up against the hatred he entertained towards him for presuming to cast eyes on his love.

Grace's treasures must, however, be preserved, and so, leaving Abdul on guard, Paul went to the general to claim the property as Mr. Lufton's, and ask for a guard. Looting was going on pretty freely all over the place, but the attention of the plunderers had been chiefly directed towards the Rani's quarters, in hopes of finding jewels.

In one of the rooms on the ground floor, was found young Wigley of the 77th, very weak, but in a fair way of recovery. The Rani, cruel as she had been to others, had been merciful and kind to him, sending him her own physician, and seeing personally to everything for his comfort.

She was wayward and impulsive; under the education she had received she was cruel and regardless of human life, yet at times she could be tender and womanly, and Wigley always declared throughout his after-life, that she was all that was good and kind to him, and he firmly be-

lieved that she was goaded on to the course she took by many injustices on the part of the British Government. It was useless to urge before him that she had countenanced, and even ordered murders. Why had she not murdered him? Why had she not revenged herself on the British before going out to battle with them, by hanging him over the gateway and then going out to meet her death. Ah! and such a death—there was a grandeur in the soul of that woman few people had any conception of. The very night before she went out, she had sat by his bedside, and had made his sherbet for the night. What made her more than usually affectionate and womanly; was it the thought that it was the last she would be able to do for her poor wounded boy-prisoner, who ere long would be in the hands of his own countrymen?

He never saw her again, but he sorrowed as perhaps no one else did for her, when he heard of her being found dead on the field of battle with the drawn sword in her hand, and a hecatomb of slain around her; and the character of the Rani of Asālgurh always found

one enthusiastic defender in the young ensign whom she had brought back from death's door.

There had been a court-martial held during the day on the prisoners, and it was decided they should all be shot.

This may seem a cruel verdict, as indeed it was, and under ordinary circumstances it would be difficult to justify it in civilized warfare, but it was argued that most of these men had been witnesses of, if not partakers in, the massacre of Amānpur, and therefore they deserved death on that ground alone, also that it was expedient to strike terror into the hearts of the numerous petty Rajas and chiefs in the surrounding country, and therefore a stern example must be made. So the order went forth that one hundred human beings were that night to be hurled into eternity, "Pour encourager les autres," an old veteran officer grimly remarked, as dissenting from the verdict he left the council-tent.

There was something to be said for, and a good deal against, the measure. Some vengeance was due to the *manes* of those who fell at Amānpur, every sepoy of the 77th who had been caught, had been

executed without a shadow of hesitation, but then these men were not sepoy, they were merely followers of the Thakoors their chiefs; still these very Thakoors had taken part in the siege of Mr. Lufton's house, and how could they choose between the greater and lesser guilt of individuals? It was a cruel necessity, but the example was a necessity: it must be carried out that night.

"I am uncommonly glad none of my men are told off for that work," remarked Colonel Barton, as the unfortunate prisoners were led off to execution in batches of thirty.

"There are some fine strapping fellows among them," said Paul. "Look at those two men in the centre of that group, regular dare-devils, I'll warrant."

The two men were conversing together in low tones, when one of them suddenly looked up, and as he cast a glance at the group of which Colonel Barton and Paul formed a part, he visibly started and said something to his comrade, who also looked up.

"I know that man," said Abdul, coming up to Paul; "that is Jeswunt Sing,

my cousin's *burkundaz*, the man who stunned and threw me down the well."

"I have no doubt he thinks you are a ghost, Abdul," replied Paul; "he stares hard enough at you."

"I should have liked to have met that man in a fair fight, Sahib; but his fate has come to him at last."

"I thought I'd sent that stripling to Jehannum, Beni Sing Bhai," said Jeswunt to his companion, "but there he is, sure enough; few men have ever lived to complain of the crack of my *latthi*, and how he got out of that well is a mystery."

"Ay, and now his turn has come, Jeswunt Bhai, and in another hour he will have the pleasure of seeing you wriggling like a broken-back snake, with half-a-dozen bullets through you."

"Better that, than being hung by a lot of sweepers, like those sepoys the other day. We shall save our caste anyhow, and maybe some one will come in the night and put a bit of fire in our mouths to purify us, for some of our men must be lurking about."

"Look here, Bhaiya!" said the outlaw chief with determination in his tone, "they have not tied us hand and foot, and Beni

Sing is not the man to be shot down like a dog without a try for his life; listen to my words and take my advice, the moment the firing party get the word 'present,' drop like a stone, the next thing will be a volley, then up and run; it takes a good shot to hit a running man, and it is worth trying."

"All right, Bhai; I'm not going to be knocked on the head like a jackal if I can help it, so we'll make a run for it."

"These English talk a great deal about their justice and mercy; look at yonder boy, he is only thirteen if he is a day, why should he be shot? What has he done? It is just like them, all talk, talk; but they have got the upper hand now, so we must keep our mouths shut."

"If you get away, Beni Sing Bhai, what will you do?"

"Get up a band again, and live the old life till I am fairly brought to bay. My time has not come yet, I am sure."

"Well, I am not so sure of it myself. I had an ill-omen last night, a jackal ran across my path and howled, as I went out to fetch water."

"Never mind the jackals and their howls, Jeswunt Bhai; jackals are every-



where, and their howls we hear all night. You just follow me."

"Then I think it is a bad sign that boy turning up. When did I ever fail to despatch a victim before?"

"That goes for nothing, it is all chance; why, brother, if I had gone about hunting for omens and signs, I should have been dead long ago. See, here we are at the place, now they will begin. Remember, drop at the word 'present.'"

The prisoners were divided into three groups of about thirty odd each.

One group was marched away behind a square building, against the wall of which they were made to stand, the other two were placed out in the open plain, and made to sit down. They obeyed in a resigned and apathetic manner, some made a sort of appeal for mercy, but it was done in a despairing kind of way as though they knew it was a useless request; the greater number were resigned to their fate.

The firing parties were brought up, a breathless silence reigned over the place, broken only by the word of command and the ominous clicking of gun-locks, which followed the order "ready." Most of the

prisoners shut their eyes and bent their heads. Only in the centre of one group were two men who watched every motion with cat-like intensity. Out rung the orders "present!" "fire!" A rush of bullets swept over the two men lying flat on the ground, a rush of bullets accompanied by the thud and crash of smitten flesh and bone, and the piercing shrieks and groans of the sufferers.

"Run! run! Jeswunt," shouted Beni Sing, springing to his legs and half pulling up his companion. The pair dashed out under cover of the smoke, and got a clear start; one other man who had his wits about him followed, and the three raced for life across the plain towards the nullah, followed by a rapid fire of sharp-shooters. Several troopers—not of Barton's horse—who were on the ground, gave chase, but fortune seemed to favour the fugitives. Beni Sing had not a scratch, though the bullets whistled about his ears. Jeswunt had been hit twice, but not in important places, and both the men strained their nerves to the utmost, but just as they reached the brink of the nullah, Jeswunt received another ball which sent him

headlong down the bank, at the same time the third man who had not the same start as the others fell under the sabre of one of the troopers, who with a trenchant stroke sheared off his head at one blow.

Jeswunt sank fainting on the sand, in the bed of the ravine.

“I am done for, Beni Sing Bhaiya, save yourself; I knew it was not my fate to escape.”

Beni Sing turned and with Herculean strength hoisted his comrade on his back and struggled on, but the sound of pursuers came on their track, and Jeswunt urged him to fly and save himself.

“It is no good trying to save me, Beni Sing Bhai, my time has come, leave me under some bush and save thyself. I have got three bullets in my body and shall never be of use to thee or any one again.”

Beni Sing laid him tenderly down under some thick shrubs, and wringing his hands, sprang forward into the jungle and disappeared, just as a body of men came in sight.

The next morning as Paul and Abdul rode down the street of a little village near the fort, they saw a knot of English

soldiers round a tree, some of whom were busy tying a noose on a branch.

Paul's curiosity prompted him to go up to them, and then he found that they had got a half-dead native lying on the ground, a poor wounded wretch, hardly able to move.

"What are you about, lads?" he asked.

"Shure, Surr," replied an unmistakable Hibernian, "it's one o' thim saypoy divils that escaped last night, an' we've just got to hang 'im up, shure."

"Why, Abdul, it's your friend, isn't it?"

"Yes, that is Jeswunt Sing."

"Speak to him."

The young trooper dismounted and went up to the dying man, the soldiers making way for him and looking on with curiosity.

Jeswunt Sing opened his eyes and on meeting Abdul's, closed his with a shudder.

"Jeswunt Sing!"

"Yes, I know who calls—'twas the first time my blow ever failed."

"Jeswunt Sing, look at me!"

The dying man opened his eyes.

"Who was it who told you to abduct

my grandfather's adopted daughter—was it Munshi Karīm-ullah?"

"Yes!"

"Did he tell you to kill me if you could?"

Jeswunt feebly nodded his head, he was getting too weak to give utterance to more—in fact Abdul wanted no more—and as he turned away, the wounded man gave a shiver and a groan, and it was but a lifeless corpse the soldiers slung on the branch.

## CHAPTER IV.

WE must now go back a few days. Fred Scamperby and Mr. Lufton were posted with a body of Eusuf Khan's horse on the borders of the latter's territory, waiting anxiously for the arrival of the fugitives from Asālgurh.

Some hours had passed and they grew weary with suspense and apprehension.

If all had gone well the fugitives might already have arrived.

Fred drew his watch, and after getting a good glow on to the end of his cigar, he held it to the dial; "Past three o'clock, sir, and no sign of them."

"We must wait and hope, Fred," replied Mr. Lufton, with a sigh, and breathing a prayer for the safety of his daughter.

Fred muttered something, but it was not exactly a prayer; he thought the Haji and his assistants had made a bungle of the business.

“Hark, sir, there is some one coming,” said he, as sounds of rapid footsteps approached.

The next moment Jorawur, breathless and exhausted fell at their feet.

“Where is the lady? where are the others? speak!” demanded the younger Englishman.

“Give the man breathing time, Fred,” said Mr. Lufton, who though anxious was more calm.

After a few seconds, the man gained breath enough to gasp out the news that the girls had been recaptured.

“Then they must be rescued, even from the gates of Asālgurh,” cried Fred impetuously; “let us not lose a minute. Here! mount this man on some one’s horse. That man Rehmat Khan has got fever, he can’t go with us; put the Shikari on his horse. I think, sir, you had better stay here, or return to Sherghati. I only want twenty men, more would be an incumbrance.”

“Indeed, Fred, I shall do nothing of the kind,” answered the judge warmly. “If my Gracie has to be rescued, I will share the toil and the danger.”

“I beg your pardon, sir, come by all means if you like ; but, uncle, we must ride like mad, and fight, maybe, like fiends, and I, for myself, would feel less responsible for my actions were you not with me.”

“That is to say, Fred, you would do some of those insane, rash deeds of yours, out of which you have hitherto had the luck to come with flying colours ; but never mind, my lad, I will back you up, and perhaps a little old steadiness may do good, but there is no time to waste in talking.”

“There is not indeed, sir.”

“Forward—trot ! No skirting along the hills, Jorawur, I’m going to take the shortest way to Asālgurh, and wait for these villains, ay, even under the walls of the fort.”

Day was just breaking as the troop of horsemen, thirty-five all told, wound down a small pass on a spur of the range opposite Asālgurh. A mile in front lay the fort, in the far distance could be discerned the town of Amānpur ; the plain between was dotted with tree-embosomed hamlets surrounded by gardens and fertile fields.

However, the leaders of the troop had no eyes for the landscape, fair as it was ;



they were eagerly scanning the country for signs of those they were in search of. Away to the left was another spur, and down a rugged road of this was wending another body of men, on foot, but bearing two rude litters, which somewhat retarded their progress.

Fred caught sight of these, and nearly jumped out of his saddle. "We have got them, sir, we have got them," he cried exultingly, and so saying he dashed down the steep road followed by the rest; riding at a breakneck pace he got between the advancing party and the fort, unperceived, thanks to a dense jungle of palas bushes which fringed the base of the hills. Then forming up his men across the narrow pathway, he waited.

The Dacoits came along unsuspectingly. In front strode the chief, Beni Sing, attended by his cousin Jeswunt, the rest of his band followed behind, surrounding the litters in which were the two girls. Beni Sing and Jeswunt were talking in that loud braggadocio style, so affected by their class, as if their conversation were not so much for themselves as for the hearers in general, and the topic was the success of the

expedition, how they had captured the Haji, and binding him to one of their strongest men had sent him off to Asālgurh, where no doubt the Nawab would give them some fun in torturing the cross-grained old brute. Then how they had found the two girls, but there was some one whom they had not got, some clever fellow who was up to the ways of woodcraft, no one but a Shikari could have hid them in such a way. Jorawur was the sort of man to do it, but then Jorawur was dead, or so maimed as to be useless ; it must have been some one else.

Thus freely talking, they swung along the road at an easy pace, not dreaming of interruption, with the dark walls of the fort looming in front of them, when suddenly turning a bend in the road, they saw not fifty yards ahead a body of horsemen barring the way. At first the most of them thought that the Nawab had sent out to meet them, but Beni Sing's hawk-like eye was not to be deceived, and calling out " Bhag! bhag! fly! fly!" he dashed into the jungle, followed by Jeswunt and some of the others. The men in charge of the litters were surrounded and made prisoners.

The next moment, Grace was folded in the arms of her father, both of them too much overcome for speech, but Fred, though he envied the paternal embrace, and longed to emulate it, felt the danger in delaying, so he hurried Grace, after giving her a bear-like squeeze and a kiss on her forehead, which was excusable under the circumstances, back again into her litter, and made the prisoners lift her and Fazilla and hurry off in the Sherghati direction.

“It is the best way for them to travel, sir,” he remarked to Mr. Lufton, “if we are followed, you must put Grace on the spare horse and ride for your lives, whilst I tackle the pursuers; what to do with this other fair lady I don’t know,” he continued, eyeing Fazilla aside, with a comical expression, and puffing hard at his cigar; “I’m afraid she cannot sit a trooper’s horse, so I must e’en snatch her up and bolt with her in the fashion of the old knights when they carried off their fair Griseldas.”

Mr. Lufton could not help laughing, despite the gravity of the situation, and they went on urging the captured dacoits with demonstrations of revolver and sword-point, till at last they reached the frontier of the

Nawab's territory, and were met by him with a larger force, which he gathered as soon as he heard of the expedition for the rescue.

They were not followed, for the simple reason that when Beni Sing reached the fort, the Nawab had again left, to make arrangements for one more stand against the British a few miles beyond Asālgurh, and he had taken all his available cavalry. The Rani flatly refused to send out a single man to recapture the English lady for him, and so Beni Sing shrugged his shoulders and let the matter drop, cursing his hard fate that had not only lost him a heavy reward, but also some of his men.

Another thing too was strange; what had become of the other prisoner, the Haji? he had been tied by the hands and made over to the strongest man in the troop, but he had not appeared.

The Nawab Yusuf Khan had brought an elephant for the use of the ladies, so whilst the animal was being made to kneel down, the dacoits who had been made to carry the litters were pinioned.

"I suppose," said Fred, "that we must

give these rascals their wages, a short shrift and a long rope."

"Indeed, Fred, you must do nothing of the kind," exclaimed Grace vehemently, turning to him. "I cannot have any horrors committed on the day of my deliverance. These are very good men, they have treated me civilly and have borne me tenderly; indeed you must not hang them. Papa dear, say they shall not be hung; is it not enough to have gone through all the horrors and the misery we have without adding more horrors to the day of our deliverance? It would take away all the pleasure of this day from me, did I look back on such a crime. Fred, I will never speak to you again if you hang these men."

"All right, Grace," replied the young man with a smile, "I'm not so blood-thirsty as all that. I believe these fellows to be unmitigated scoundrels, and as mutineers they deserve hanging, but if uncle here has no objection, I will give them my blessing and an exhortation to mend their ways, which of course they won't do, and then let them go to be caught and hung by some one else."

“I vote for letting them go, Fred,” replied Mr. Lufton, “they are mostly ignorant men, and they may not have been guilty of deeds deserving of death; at all events we know of none, and it would be a pity to sully the happiness of to-day by any hasty act.”

“You’re right, sir, you’re right. Here you *budmash log*, you were going to be hung you know,” (Yes, my lord,) “and you richly deserve it,” (No, no my lord, we are poor innocent people.) “Come, stop that, I know what you are, regular scamps, and hanging is the right thing for you.” (Groans from the prisoners.) “But this young lady here has got a soft heart, and she has begged for your lives, so be off with you, and go back to your homes, if you’ve got any, and don’t go taking up arms against the Sirkar again,” (No, no, Sahib, never, we’ll never do it again.) “You’re all liars, you know; you’ll do it again to-morrow, and some Sahib will catch you and hang you, so I am only letting you off for a time. Here,” continued he, “addressing some of the troopers, “untie these fellows and let them go.”

As soon as they were liberated the men

ran to Grace and threw themselves at her feet, and then hurried from the place.

The elephant was mounted, and the party took the road to Sherghati, where the Nawab had prepared rooms for his friend's daughter.

Grace and her father speculated much on the fate of the Haji: the old man was endeared to them by many ties, he had proved faithful through many trials, and now as success was attained, he was absent, and his fate was doubtful. Fazilla was very thoughtful about him, she had begun to realize at last that he was her father, and though she could not feel the keen anguish she would have felt had it been one of her adopted father's family, still she grieved over the loss of the stern old man who was so tender to her, and who spoke so well of her betrothed, but of the latter she thought more, as was but natural. True to the instinct of her countrymen, she bowed to fate, but at the same time hoped and longed for good news of him.

The two girls little knew how near to them their betrothed were.

## CHAPTER V.

THE Haji had driven his bullocks with savage energy, and, as a stern chase is proverbially a long chase, it was some time before his pursuers came up with him. He made no attempt to evade them, the longer he could delay them by palavering, so much the better, the question of his own safety never entered the old man's head. Of course he was recognized, and Beni Sing roughly asked him what he was doing there.

"That is no affair of yours," answered the old Wahabi.

"But it is an affair of mine, and of that of your master, the Nawab Sahib, who has ordered me to fetch you back."

"The Nawab Sahib did nothing of the kind; it is not likely the Nawab Sahib would set *you* to look after *me*."

The assurance of the old man rather



staggered the dacoits, when Beni Sing suddenly turned on him again with the question, "Where are your companions? I saw you just now with others."

"I don't see why I should answer your questions," replied the Haji, "you go your way, if, as you say, you are on the Nawab's service, and let me go mine."

"Then back you go to the Nawab Sahib's," shouted the dacoit leader in a rage; "you are a traitor, and a traitor's death you shall have; here, seize him, and bind his hands, no, not behind his back, but so, leave a long end of the rope. Now Juggernath Sing, you take him back to Asalgurh and see that he does not escape."

Juggernath Sing was a tall man of Herculean proportions, the champion of the troop, and more than a match for the Haji, although he too was tall and wiry, but Juggernath was some twenty years younger.

"I'll take care of him," he answered with a grin, fastening the end of the rope round his own waist. "Here we are tethered like a couple of bullocks, and he will be a cute fellow if he can give me the slip."

"Well, take him on to the fort whilst we continue the search for the others."

“Beni Sing Bhai,” suggested his lieutenant Jeswunt, “would it not be a good plan to torture him a bit before we let him go? he might tell us where the others are hid. We might heat a few rainrods.”

“Nay, nay, Bhai,” answered the cautious leader, “it would not do without the Nawab Sahib’s permission, we do not know what bond of union there is between these two. There is something, any blind man can see that, for this man used to say and do things with impunity that others would have lost their lives for. They are co-religionists, and if it turned out we had screwed him a little, the Nawab might turn upon us as well as on him. Had it been any one else, we would have operated on him at once. I passed a burying beetle just now, and that is a grand thing for extorting a confession without leaving any sign.”

“Yes, I should like to pin this old villain flat on his back, and put the beetle under half a cocoa-nut tied down on his stomach; how he would yell when it began to burrow.”

“I don’t know that he would, he’s a tough old fellow, he’d curse not a little I have no doubt: but we are losing time,

Juggernath Sing. Be off with you; we must disperse and scour these valleys without further delay."

The Haji was marched off by the son of Anak, who considered himself quite equal to the task of conducting a wild rhinoceros or a young elephant: he cracked a few jokes about his captive, and warned him not to play any tricks, holding out his biceps for his admiration, and concluding with a trick peculiar to the Indian athlete, that of bending his left arm to an acute angle against his brawny chest and smiting it with a hollow hand, making a report like a pistol.

The Haji said not a word, but looked at these antics with supreme contempt.

In fact the old man's brain was busily working on other matters as they walked along, and he paid but little heed to his hair-brained warder's conversation. He felt that a serious crisis in his life had approached.

If he lived to be handed over to the Nawab, there was little doubt but that he would be put to death, and therefore it would be better if, possible to die without ignominy, but how was this to be done?

The Haji carefully reviewed his career.

He had been false to his leader, and had served the infidel.

True, but then the leader had been false to his obligations and the infidel had been kind and tolerant. He was absolved of his oath to the foresworn Wahabi, but he was not equally clear as to his relations to the English people, who were not of his faith. Did not the Quran say that even the Christian who believed in God and the last day, and who did good works, should not suffer, and did not these who had housed and sheltered him and had nursed him in illness, and respected his devotions, believe in God and do good works? Verily he had seen no such honest dealing amongst his own nation. Again, did not the prophet Mahomed take advantage of the hospitality of the Christian monarch of Abyssinia for his family when hard pressed by his enemies? Then came the one great thought of his heart, when he had lost wife and child he devoted himself to the cause of God, and his fervent prayer was that he might die a martyr. Suicide would certainly not gain him that coveted honour, but to die for the faith by the hands of an infidel would do so, and now he

had offered himself up that his daughter might escape and the daughter of his benefactor, and therefore if he died by the hand of the unbeliever he felt assured his aim would be accomplished, and therefore he was not careful of his speech before Beni Sing, not caring whether he goaded him into taking sanguinary revenge on him. Now, however, the aspect of affairs was different, and he was quietly being led along like an ox to the slaughterer's. And who was this man who was taking him? A Kaffir—a worshipper of idols and an ungodly ruffian to boot. Surely, killing him would not only be a justifiable but a meritorious action? If he died in so doing, would he not be entitled to the martyr's crown, as the sacred writings assured him? After much sophistical reasoning the Haji came to the conclusion that getting rid of his escort, even at the loss of his own life, would be a right and proper and desirable thing to do.

How was this to be done? He was a prisoner, bound by the hands, the warder was a man of enormous strength with the free use of his limbs. But it was to be done. The old man felt a frenzy coming over

him. Sooner than be taken back to Asālgurh, he would fight to the death, and he looked about as the road became more narrow and precipitous. At one place the path wound round the brow of a hill; on the one side rose the steep bank, on the other a rocky cliff of about eighty or ninety feet went sheer down to the granite bed of a mountain torrent. At one place the road was not more than four feet wide. The Haji cast a glance down, which his comrade misunderstood.

“Ay, ay, Khan Sahib, how would you like to be pitched down there, eh? but even that would be better for you than the justice the Nawab Sahib will deal to you. I shan't forget in a hurry that night when he had poor Jorawur's nose and ears sliced off. Your hooked nose, old man, will make a grand slice, won't it? wouldn't you like to jump down there, and end your misery; but no, it must not be. I have got to deliver you at Asālgurh.”

“But it shall be,” shouted the old man, turning on his guard and with his manacled hands seizing him by the waist-band. “Ya, Allah! receive the sacrifice,” he yelled, as with a violent effort he hurled

himself over the precipice dragging the *dacoit* after him.

A wild scream of agony rent the air as the two bodies rolled over and over, and fell with a dull crash on the boulders below, one man was crushed and battered, one was stunned yet breathing. The heavier man had fallen undermost, and the Haji, though senseless from the shock, was yet with bones unbroken, miraculously preserved. It was some time ere he came to his senses, and when he did he found it was night.

At first he woke up as it were out of a dream, and remembering the past, thought that he was in the other world, with the angels Munkir and Mekir coming to question him about his past life.

But he gradually came to himself and began to realize his situation. By the aid of his teeth he with great patience managed after a time to undo the knots in the rope which confined his hands, he felt very much bruised and stiff, but no bones were broken. He offered up a thanksgiving to Allah for his miraculous escape, and then began to consider how he should find his way to Sherghāti.

The wild scene, with the flood of moon-

light pouring over the rough granite rocks, the rugged cliff on one side and the dark jungle beyond, with the awful catastrophe in which he had taken a part, and the evidences of which lay before him in the battered, lifeless form that was stretched at his feet, made but little impresssion on the old warrior, whose whole life had been familiar with hairbreadth escapes and dark tragedies.

He turned the *dacoit* over, for he wished to possess himself of his weapons. He must have been killed instantaneously, for his skull was crushed, and the feeling in the Haji's mind as he noticed the brawny chest and muscular limbs, and called to mind the boastful language, was that of a savage triumph, untinged by any shade of pity or remorse. It was only one more Kaffir sent to the regions below; a subject for congratulation rather than otherwise.

So without the least compunction he left the body of his late custodian to be eaten by the jackals and hyænas, and commenced a weary struggle over the rocks.

The weapons he had possessed himself of, consisted of a long Afghan knife, broad at the base and tapering gradually to a point, a double dagger called a *bichhu*, or



scorpion, made of two gazelle horns united at the base, and overlapping in such a way as to allow of the hand being passed between them for a firm grip, the points being tipped with steel; and an old flint-lock pistol.

The freebooter's matchlock had been broken in the fall, so it was of no use, but his powder-horn and wallet the Haji appropriated. He had to traverse some wild country; on either side of the river-bed rose rugged hills covered with dense jungle.

Few of the most fearless of the hardy aboriginal tribes, born and brought up in the solitudes of the forest, would have dared to journey through that ravine at midnight, unless he carried a smouldering log of the Gubdi tree, to whirl about and dash in the face of any wandering beast of prey, for that part of the country had a reputation, being haunted by tigers and panthers, some of whom had taken to man-eating.

The pools in the river-bed were much frequented by spotted deer, and the jungles swarmed with peafowl, both attractive to the feline race.

The Haji heard the distant roar of a wandering tiger, which echoed through the glen like a muffled peal of thunder, and it was answered by the loud call of a startled peafowl: not knowing when he might be brought face to face with one of these unpleasant wanderers of the night, he drew his knife and went on, stealthily casting his eyes about. Once he thought he heard a rustle in the bushes, as if some animal were following him. He stopped and turned to listen, but there was no further sign. So, thinking it was but a freak of his fevered fancy, he went on. Again he heard the rustle, and a peafowl gave a loud Houk! paooo! paooo! from an adjacent tree.

The Haji was assured of danger; had he then escaped from the rock to fall under the fangs of a wild beast? Nay, Allah who had preserved him from the one, would save him from the other. Still precautions should be taken. He untied his waist-cloth and threw it round his neck. It was the place for which all ferocious animals made, and the cloth might save him; so clutching his knife, he went on. A grey monkey in a *Kouha* tree gave a ghostly whoop and chattered in an

angry fashion. More than ever was the old man certain he was followed. Would it not be better to climb up into a safe place and wait till morning? He turned towards an old tree whose gnarled and knotted limbs stretched invitingly over his track, but it was too late, a light yellow mass bounded from the dark bushes, and he was borne to the ground.

He felt the creature's fangs snap on the back of his neck and its hot breath almost scalding his ear, but the pressure on his neck suddenly relaxed, as the panther's jaws closed on the yielding cloth, and left even the skin unbroken.

Twisting his body round, the old Wahabi got one arm free, and the next moment sixteen inches of steel were driven to the hilt in the animal's side.

The blow was true to the heart, and the Haji, as he tore himself from the grasp of his assailant, mauled and bleeding, yet sound in wind and limb, had reason to offer up once more a thanksgiving for a second deliverance within a few hours.

The Haji chopped off the panther's tail as a trophy, and washing his wounds in an adjacent pool, he struggled onwards.

Soon after day-break, he fell in with one of the aboriginals, a swarthy little man of negro type, and as his hut was close by, he accepted his hospitality for the day, for he was sorely in need of food and rest. His body ached in every bone from the fall from the cliff, and the wounds inflicted by the panther were painful, though not dangerous.

His savage host, who was a simple-minded, kindly-hearted little man, looked at him with great respect and admiration, as the slayer of a panther with a knife, and he pounded up a few herbs which he applied to the Haji's scars to soothe the smarting. While the old man slept, the panther's skin was taken off and brought in by his host.

On the following day the old man resumed his journey, piloted to Sherghāti, or rather to the borders of the forest overlooking that place, by the hospitable savage, whose heart the Haji delighted by giving him the knife and pouch belonging to the late Juggernath Sing. On the day after Grace Lufton's deliverance from her captors, to her great delight, the Haji walked into the Nawab's house at Sherghāti.

As the old man marked his young mistress's sincere pleasure at his return, he felt he had done right in cleaving to her and hers.

And Fazilla too met him again with a smile that went to his heart, and made him feel as though he were young again, and gazing on the fair face of her mother.

The day had yet more surprises and pleasures in store for Grace. A messenger from the British camp arrived, bearing a packet for Mr. Lufton. As he broke the seal and looked into it, an exclamation of astonishment broke from his lips, and he handed an enclosure to Grace, who gave a short cry of pleasure and surprise as a well-known handwriting met her eye.

Regardless of her companions, she tore open her letter, the first she had received for so long, and eagerly devoured it.

Fred Scamperby gave her a long searching look, and as she exclaimed,—

“Why, papa, Paul is here, with the column!”

Fred rose and stalked moodily from the place. He strode down the garden walk till he came to a wall at the end, and then taking his cigar from his lips he dashed

it savagely against the masonry, muttering, "Confound it all, I can't even smoke to-night." And then he walked away in the direction of a fish-pond, surrounded by a low wall, on which he sat and dangled his legs over the water, absorbed apparently in contemplation of his boots.

Fred's equanimity must have been considerably upset, by his remaining so long unconscious of the fact that he had not a cigar in his mouth. But after a time he came to himself, and giving his legs a vigorous kick in the air, as if he were tossing off some imaginary shackles, he exclaimed, "Well, I suppose it can't be helped, but I'll just go clean away to-morrow, and ask the General to attach me to something in his force."

Ay, first thing to-morrow morning, with which comforting decision the balance of his mind was sufficiently restored to allow of his feeling in his pocket for his cigar-case, and striking a light.

## CHAPTER VI.

GRACE was awake with the early dawn next day. The events of the last six weeks appeared to her like a dream as she lay and reviewed the past. And now the dark clouds had lifted, and their silver linings had broadened till all the sky of her future seemed bright.

With what feelings of gratitude she acknowledged the merciful preservation of herself, her father, and her cousin—the sole survivors of the once pleasant little station of Amānpur—she did not then know of young Wigley's existence, as she had heard that all who escaped had been put to death. But oh! how sad were the memories of her wrecked home, and her ill-fated friends. Poor little Mrs. Algernon's brother, and brave-hearted, motherly Mrs. Spenser, and many others with whom she had been on those intimate

terms which are engendered only on board ship, or in any Indian country station.

Then all was forgotten in the thought of her lover, and as soon as it was light, she took Paul's letter out from under her pillow, and read it and re-read it.

Was it not noble of him to come out in search of her, and to imperil his life for her sake ?

He became a sort of Paladin in her eyes ; although poor Fred Scamperby and Abdul had done much more for her, she had not a thought for them ; it was all Paul, and no one else.

Of course we will give our hero credit for the will to do everything that the others had done, and even more if possible, for Paul Stanford was brave to a fault, but he simply had not the opportunity. Fred was on the spot and used his chance, and it was wisdom on Paul's part to let Abdul undertake the enterprise in which he, ignorant of the language and customs of the country, would assuredly have failed. So that, after all, he had had no hand in the liberation of his ladylove, for whom other knights had done battle, yet she awarded him the crown, as she lay there with the



long gleams of yellow light streaming in at the narrow windows.

And he was to be with them that very day. What rapture in the thought ! Then Grace grew sad for a moment, as she thought of her cousin Fred, and his devotion to her. For she knew Fred was in love with her ; she felt a little cross with him for being so. Why cannot cousins be cousinly, or even brotherly, without going any further ? She did not approve of cousins marrying, and on that ground, she thought Fred should not be encouraged.

In spite of her sophistical reasoning, she felt a little tender towards him in his disappointment ; but then, she reflected, it would not last long ; especially if he had lots of cigars. She could not stand a man who did nothing but smoke all day ; she would be jealous of his Manillas or his Trichis, or whatever particular weed he affected, but if Fred had lots of these, he would be comforted, and then he would be sure to gain distinction, as he was brave as a lion. And he was to come to them in their English home, a grim, scarred veteran, blazing with decorations, and Uncle Fred was to be the admiration of the neighbourhood.

With such fancies as these, Grace beguiled the time, as she rose and performed her toilet.

Her father, who had a tent pitched for himself in the garden adjoining her apartments, which he preferred to the small stuffy rooms of the house, came and tapped at her door.

“Come in, papa!” called Grace, who was just putting the finishing touches to her attire.

“There’s somebody wants to see you, Gracie,” he said, with a comical expression in his face, as he kissed her.

“Is it Paul, papa?” asked the girl, blushing.

“It is, my child. He rode in early this morning, and is now in my tent; so come along if you are ready.”


They went down together, and just as they entered the tent door, Mr. Lufton turned aside to give an order to a servant, and Grace found herself folded in the arms of her lover.

Mr. Lufton was a long time explaining to the servant what he wanted. The man was not dense; in fact, he had rather more than the average share of intelligence, yet the judge seemed to think it necessary to

repeat his instructions twice, and give some lengthy explanations, the reasons for which may possibly be found in certain tender reminiscences of his own, of years long past, when he met Grace's mother, after a protracted and anxious separation.

The world goes on in one unvarying round. Our grandparents and parents had their turn, now ours comes, and by-and-by the story, the old, old story, will be repeated by our children, and children's children. There is nothing new in love, it is the one thing immutable.

Fred Scamperby was absent from the breakfast-table. Grace viewed him with some concern, for she was anxious that he and Paul should be friends. But it turned out that they had already made acquaintance, for Paul met him on the road early in the morning; and as in those days two Englishmen meeting on the march did not require the ceremony of a formal introduction, they stopped and chatted, and Fred soon found out that the stranger was his successful rival, and the other became more cordial as he learned that the swarthy young soldier, followed by two smart troopers, was his intended wife's cousin.



Fred, in spite of himself, could not help liking Paul, who, on his part, was quite willing to open his heart to any one belonging to his beloved.

“He don’t look such a bad fellow, after all,” muttered Fred to himself, as, after taking leave, he set spurs to his horse, “I should have felt inclined to cut his throat if he had been a skinamalink kind o’ chap, such as girls do occasionally take up with.” And here Master Fred’s thoughts went back to his first love, at a station where he first made his appearance on the military stage as a cornet.

She was the daughter of the station chaplain, who decidedly objected to her taking no thought for the morrow, and marrying the handsome young cavalry officer, with whom she was desperately in love, and she ultimately with the paternal blessing became the wife of a little wizened, bleary-eyed civilian, whose position and large pay counterbalanced his personal shortcomings.

Fred was successful with the General, who attached him to Barton’s horse, vice Paul Stanford, volunteer, resigned.

Barton’s horse got yet another recruit

in Abdul Rahīm, to whom the Colonel offered a vacancy.

The youth was a great favourite with every one. His modesty, and quiet, self-possessed manner, added to his conspicuous bravery during the late encounters, and also in the expedition in disguise to Asāl-gurh, won the regard of all, and Colonel Barton, in proposing to Paul that he should allow his follower to join the regiment, promised to keep an eye on him, and predicted he would get promotion ere long.

A small detachment was to be left at the station of Amānpur, to guard the Presidency, in the ruins of which Mr. Lufton took up his quarters as the senior civil officer. He would have liked to keep Fred Scamperby as one of his assistants, but Fred, to his surprise, decidedly refused, and stated his intention of going on with the troops. As the young man saw his uncle was somewhat offended at the curt refusal, he made a clean breast of it, and told Mr. Lufton why he could not stay, and the old man agreed that the course he had adopted was the wisest. He felt sorry for his gallant nephew, whom he loved almost as a son.

But still, at the same time, Fred was not one he would have chosen for the husband of his daughter. He was brave and dashing, a thorough soldier, but he was not intellectual. He flourished in excitement, and showed to advantage; but in times of peace he got bored to death, and had to take refuge in smoke, billiards, and cards, and for the latter reason alone, Mr. Lufton would have objected to him as a son-in-law, even had he not been his daughter's cousin, which was another bar. He had never seen Fred open a book, unless it were the "Sporting Magazine," and on the whole he had not formed a high estimate of his mental powers, though he gave him full credit for many good qualities. So it was a good thing that he should go on active service, and forget his cousin for a while.

The arrangements were soon made for the advance of the column in the direction where fresh bodies of the rebels were reported to be forming.

Asālgurh was to be garrisoned by the Nawab Eusuf Khan, who had been publicly thanked and complimented in a grand reception given to him by the General. The

troops were all drawn up to do honour to the brave and loyal old chief, as well as to give his followers some idea of our strength. And he might have received a general salute, had not the political agent with the column stated that, according to strict etiquette, his rank was not sufficient to allow of such an honour, and as it had not been done with other chiefs of equal standing, it would create jealousy and misunderstanding, so, at the last moment, officers were detached from the General's staff to inform the various commanders that they were not to salute.

Amongst the aides on this occasion was an elderly major, who had served long in civil employ, and, as he had been driven by the rebels out of his district, was fain for a time to lay aside the pen for the sword.

On the Sherghāti road a detachment of Barton's horse was waiting to escort the Nawab in, and the Major, having communicated his orders to all those in his line, galloped on, and reining up before Pat Conolly, who was in command, blurted out, hot and out of breath with his scamper in the sun,—

“Conolly, you’re not to present arms to the Nawab. General’s orders.”

“Dad, and we niver do present arms to anybody at all, at all,” replied Pat, as cool as a cucumber.

The Major looked angrily at him for a moment, and then, suddenly recollecting himself, burst out laughing.

“Well, well, you’re not to do t’other thing, Conolly. Carry swords, ain’t it?”

“Right you are this time, Simpkin. You see, you’ve been enjoying the loaves and fishes of the civil service so long, you’ve got rusty in your drill. However, you see I’m not drawn up in line like the rest, but am told off as a guard of honour, so I must salute the Nawab when he comes, and faith! I’ll do it heartily, for he is a fine old fellow; and if I were the general, I’d give him a general salute, in spite of all the politicals that ever breathed.”

“All right; that’s your look out, not mine. Old Lufton and his pretty daughter are coming in, aren’t they?”

“Yes, I believe they are.”

“Well, that girl deserves a salute, if all I hear be true; and she is a pretty girl, too.”



“ Ay, that she is ; and Stanford’s a lucky fellow.”

“ Why, what’s he got to do with it ?”

“ Got to do with it ; faith ! everything. He’s going to marry her.”

“ Oh !” groaned the Major, with a sentimental expression ; “ but that’s bad. I’d a notion of going in for her myself.”

“ You ! you old sinner, Simpkin ? You go and learn a little more of the goose-step. Lose an arm and get a V.C., and then perhaps some elderly spin or sentimental dowager may take compassion on your ugly mug and what is left of you. But you needn’t think of a girl like Grace Lufton, my boy.”

Simpkin, who was the butt of the whole camp, was used to such remarks, and he always took them with imperturbable good humour. On this occasion he screwed his face—which was rather like that of a bull-frog with the mumps, diversified by smallpox—into a comical leer, and shaking his fist at Pat, he galloped off.

At the reception the fine old Pathan was less the object of general attention than the brave and handsome girl who had behaved so nobly during the short and

disastrous siege of Amānpur, and who had since gone through such perils. And as in the evening, after partaking of the General's hospitality for the day, she rode back to Amānpur with her father, the men of the English regiments, whose camping-grounds she passed, turned out and greeted her with ringing cheers.

The next day the camp broke up, and the column marched on its way. Fred Scamperby got leave to stay behind and catch up the regiment at the next halting-place.

He stigmatized himself as an unmitigated fool for thus hovering about his cousin like the proverbial moth. He dreaded saying good-bye, yet he could not leave without doing so. He hung about her all the morning, trying to appear at ease, but with a smothered volcano in his heart. Lunch-time came and went, and for once in his life Fred had passed half a dozen hours without a cigar. In the afternoon Mr. Lufton took him aside for some private conversation, which Fred bore with great impatience, but when it was done he dreaded going back to Grace, for the sun was beginning to slant in the western horizon, and he knew he should have to say good-bye.

At this juncture Paul, who had been writing letters, came in and engaged Mr. Lufton's attention, and Fred slipped out with a heavy heart. He had left Grace in the little room which had served as a dining and drawing-room, till the house was put into repair.

She had evidently taken up a book, one was lying at her feet; but she had not read much, for, overcome by excitement and fatigue, she had fallen asleep. Her head was resting against the back of her easy chair, the masses of rich brown hair thrown into relief by the bright green foliage of the "*Ipomæa per capræ*," which, during the time the house had lain in ruins, had densely covered the verandah. The sun, slanting in through a side-door, and pouring into her lap, lighted up with dazzling brilliancy the rich blue silk she wore. Fred never saw a blue silk of that particular tint for years after without feeling a tightness about the heart.

Grace had worn colours only since Paul's return. Hitherto she had dressed in simple black, which, after all, suited her, as it suits, in our opinion, every lady best; but her father's favourite colour for her was

blue, and her lover liked it too. So she got out this dress from her rescued wardrobe, and wore it.

Fred stopped on the threshold. Well, perhaps, after all, it was best it was so. Had she been awake, he would have made a fool of himself. Fate had ordered it wisely. Fred was a man of strong impulses and quick action. He saw a pair of scissors lying on the table. With these he snipped off a tiny lock of hair, and printing a light kiss on her forehead so as not to awake her, he rushed from the room.

His horse was waiting outside.

"It is not time to go yet, Fred," replied his uncle, as he said good-bye.

"Oh yes, sir, it is," answered the young man; "quite time. I want to get in early, for my horse must get rested for a long march to-morrow."

The two young men shook hands, and Paul stepped aside, as he thought the two relatives might have something to say to each other in private.

"Good-bye, sir," said Fred, setting his teeth and trying to look unconcerned. "You will say good-bye to her for me."

“Why, Fred, I thought you had just left her.”

“She was asleep, so I didn’t wake her; it was better so. Good-bye, sir, you’ll hear from me sometimes,” and vaulting into his saddle, he galloped down the avenue just as Grace woke, and looked out to see who was leaving.

Mr. Lufton felt sad at the parting, but he agreed with Fred it was better so. “The least said under these circumstances, the better,” he thought, as he turned back into the house.

Fred rode at speed for about two miles, and then, remembering his horse, pulled up.

“What’s the good of thinking about it any more; it’s all over, and nothing more can come of it. I was a fool to take that hair, but I can’t throw it away now I’ve got it. But then, I needn’t look at it too often, that would be folly,” with which sage reflection he pulled out his cigar-case.

Grace, as she heard from her father of her cousin’s departure, felt deeply for him; and her heart was touched again when, in combing her hair at night, she

found that one little bit had been cut off.

“Poor Fred,” she murmured. “I hope he will get over it soon, and we shall be good friends again.”

She had nothing for which to accuse herself. She had never given him any encouragement, nor shown any partiality for him beyond cousinly regard. Her whole heart had been Paul's, and no one else had come between her love and him, so she felt sorrow for poor Fred's disappointment, but without a tinge of remorse. She was sad only because he was unhappy.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE station of Amānpur began by degrees to recover its former aspect. There were painful memories, it was true, especially for those who had been there in former days. And there had been a sad and impressive ceremony, when the bones of some seventy of their fellow countrymen and women had been gathered from the gravel-pit into which they had been cast, and interred by the chaplain to the avenging column.

But Time, the great healer, brought forgetfulness of the great tragedy that had been enacted there. With fresh faces and fresh hearts the sorrows of the past were brought only occasionally to memory, and the round of station life went on as before and as it does in every little Mofussil station.

Mr. Lufton had been appointed commissioner, and went to live in the Residency. Grace was not sorry, for she dreaded a return to the old house, with all its harrow-

ing reminiscences. A new judge and new magistrate, new assistants and new policemen came in time, and Amānpur was once more a station.

The cold weather had set in and brought with it much of the gaiety of the season.

About this time Paul received news of his having succeeded to the baronetcy. His cousin had fallen in India some months before, so he knew he was the heir, but he hardly expected to succeed so soon. Young Gervas Stanford had a short career, though a brilliant one. Young as he was, he had seen much service, and had been severely wounded in the Crimea, and he found a soldier's grave in the second attack on Cawnpore. His father did not long survive the blow, and now Paul was the seventh baronet.

There was no longer any reason why the marriage should be put off, and so in the bright month of December Grace became Lady Stanford. The ceremony took place, as most Indian weddings do, in the afternoon, and in the evening the bride and bridegroom started in palanquins for Asālgurh, where Sir Paul had a fancy to pass the honeymoon.



He used to remark jokingly in after-life, that he had a grand wedding, going off in two carriages and eight, referring to the eight palki bearers.

The fort, which was to be dismantled, was now in the hands of the Nawab Eusuf Khan, who was anxious for them to take his house at Sherghati, but Paul clung to his fancy, and Grace, though she had some dislike to entering the place again, gave in to his whim like an obedient wife.

And in truth it was not an unpleasant place. The Rani's apartments were spacious and airy, and commanded pleasant views of the country round. The orange garden, with its golden hoard of oranges, lemons, and gigantic shaddocks, its fountains and pavilions, its groves thronged with singing birds, and heavy with luscious perfume, made a thoroughly oriental retreat, quite in the Lalla Rookh style.

“This is much better than a dingy Dak Bungalow, Gracie, or one of those lath and plaster houses of semi-European construction. This is something we can look back to in after-days, when we have left this land for ever.”

“I like it,” replied Grace, “although

it has sad memories of weary days attached to it, but all places are bright with you, Paul, and I am glad we came."

The days passed pleasantly as Paul sketched the place and the people, and Grace the flowers, fruit, and gorgeous butterflies, and they had several reminders from Mr. Lufton, that he was lonely without his young folks, before they returned to the station.

They soon had to prepare for a longer separation, for it was necessary that Paul should return to England to look after his estates.

Fred had sent to his cousin a wedding present of barbaric splendour, consisting of a necklace of uncut emeralds and diamonds, which he had reft from the neck of a fallen chief. He apologized for his uncouth gift, but said there were no Bond Street shops where he was. But the gems were estimated afterwards at seven hundred pounds, so he need not have apologized for them. And Grace, who prized them much for the donor's sake, would wear them occasionally, and people would remark them curiously and talk of Lady Stanford's Indian necklace, and how she

was a heroine in the mutiny, and magnify tenfold the value of the gems.

There are two of the party at Amānpur of whom we must not lose sight, the Haji and his daughter Fazilla.

The latter was constantly with Grace. She had little companionship with her father. She was a thoughtful, liberal-minded girl, whose education, so far as it had gone, had only whetted her desire to know more.

He was a rugged, narrow-minded enthusiast, honest in heart, earnestly desiring to do what was right, but rigidly bound by the tenets of his religion, and that religion his daughter was beginning to forsake. She did not dare to tell him this; he would have spurned her from him did he but suspect that she had a leaning towards Christianity. Nay, he might even in his fanatical fury have plunged his long knife to the hilt in her bosom. So she kept her secret, and tried to do her duty simply and affectionately to him, but with the sense of impending evil when the truth was once made known. She had but one hope, that of winning her future husband over to her way of thinking, and then

unitedly, they might brave the old man's ire. Abdul was better educated than herself, although under Grace's tuition Fazilla had made rapid strides. But moreover, Abdul had a calm, reasoning mind, and was not fanatical, as was her father, and also to some extent his grandfather. Yes, she would win him over first, and then they would both declare themselves Christians.

The Haji meanwhile was perturbed in spirit. He had reconciled to his conscience that he had done well, and in accordance with the Quran, in adhering to his master and his young mistress in their troubles. That did not now affect him. He had also got a letter from a very learned and high Wahabi to whom he had stated his case, and it reassured him, the writer dwelling on the fact that the rebellion was unlawful and did not in any way partake of the nature of a *jihad*; he had also recovered his daughter, and therefore he was not alone in the world, which seemed brighter to him now. But then he had solemnly sworn that he would die for the faith, or in avenging the wrongs of his co-religionists, and here he was living at ease, with no opportunity of so doing. It must not be.

He was idling, and death would find him so, and what then would be his reward? It would be better to go away into Afghanistan, and fight against the Persians, who though Mahomedans, were Shiahs, and therefore worse than infidels. In such a mood he received a letter from the old Hakim at Sasseram, in reply to one of his, announcing the discovery of his daughter.

The old physician wrote in joyous and thankful strains,—his letter much charged with pious sentences. They had lived for some months in sorrow and despair, bereft of all who had made their old age bright. They had resigned themselves to the will of Allah, but they could not the less feel acutely the loss of those who were as dead to them. But now all was bright again. He rejoiced that he had been the means of preserving the life of his daughter for the Haji Sahib, though it was not the will of Allah that her mother should survive.

He hoped the families might yet be more closely united by the marriage of his grandson and heir to the object of the affections of them all.

He then went on to speak of the evil times that had befallen them. He had seen nothing of his nephew since the outrage on his home, and in fact the Deputy had taken every means to avoid him, but surely an evil spirit had taken possession of his heart. He was high in favour with his English superiors, who considered him loyal to their cause, and he proved his loyalty by bringing to death many innocent people who were obnoxious to him, and lately he had taken up arms against the Wahabis, many good men of whom had suffered owing to his animosity; it was doubtful whether the ties of blood would be sufficiently powerful to save him (the physician) from his nephew's zeal. Certain it was that he was most active in persecuting the sect, and the Lord would reward him in his good time. They must not repine and be thankless, when so many mercies had been vouchsafed to them.

The Haji, after pondering sternly over this letter, went to his master, and asked for three months' leave.

He stated that his object was to go to Sasseram to confer with the Hakīm on the future of Fazilla.

Mr. Lufton granted the leave at once, and gave the Haji letters to help him with the officers of the districts through which he was likely to pass. The road was now open to Allahabad, and from thence his journey was easy. He advised him to leave Fazilla with Grace, as to remove her to Sasseram would be again to bring her within the influence of the unscrupulous Munshi.

The Haji's eye flashed fiercely at the mention of the Deputy, for he bitterly resented the insult offered to his daughter, but he agreed with his master that it would be better to leave her in his care. "Perhaps, by-and-by," he added significantly, "it may be safe for her to return to her husband's home."

"I hope, Ursa Major and that villainous Deputy Magistrate won't come to loggerheads," said Mr. Lufton to his daughter; "the old man is wroth, and his fiery blood will not be the calmer for meeting with Karim-ullah. How my brother can tolerate that man I don't know; to me he is a veritable snake in the grass."

"I think he ought to be tried, papa, for treating Fazilla as he did."

“So he ought, my dear, but it would be difficult to bring it home to him.”

“But Paul heard that dying man confess, and Abdul is also a witness.”

“I am afraid it would not stand good in court, my love; Abdul might be accused of revengeful motives, and Paul’s knowledge of the language is not perfect.”

“It is a shame to keep such men in Government employ,” exclaimed Grace impetuously.

“He would not be kept in the service could this be proved against him, but I think there is trouble brewing for him yet, for amongst the papers found in the Nawab’s rooms at Asālgurh, are some letters relating to Fazilla, which point to the Deputy as being the writer; this would not matter so much, were there not other things in them which disclose a traitor’s part. I shall take the matter up, and if we can connect the Munshi with the abduction of Fazilla, then it will be easy to prove the rest, and Karīm-ullah may yet swing on higher gallows than the poor wretches he has betrayed. It is, however, unfortunate that the principal witness against him, Jeswunt Sing, is dead.”



“ But there is Jorawur.”

“ True, Jorawur was one of the band, but his evidence is only second hand, for if he knows anything about the Munshi's connexion with the case, which is doubtful, Jeswunt or Beni Sing must have told him. He could not swear, unless he had actually seen Karim-ullah, or received orders from him that he was the person implicated. However, I will have the matter sifted as far as I can.”

Jorawur Shikari had been taken into Mr. Lufton's service, as a reward for the part he had taken in rescuing Grace. He wore a fold of his turban hanging down on one side, and a mass of hair on the other, to hide his want of ears, but he had a most beautiful nose, finer than the organ he had lost. There was a freshly healed scar on his forehead, which had not been there before, but there was no doubt as to his nose, why it was even slightly aquiline, and Jorawur used to sit a long time daily admiring it in a little circular, tin-framed looking-glass, of about two inches in diameter, which, with a wooden comb of the same dimensions, formed the contents of his dressing-case.


The new doctor at Amānpur formed a great contrast to poor old McTaggart. He was a young man, and enthusiastic in his profession, especially in surgery. He used to spend his time on the prowl for patients; a poor boy who begged by the wayside he cured of a frightful squint, and so deprived him of his stock in trade, driving him to work for his living as a punkah-puller; a cripple he met in the bazar, with a bad leg, was immediately pounced upon and exhorted to have it off without delay, as it would kill him in time, so a bargain was struck, in which the doctor agreed to feed up his patient, take off his leg, cure him, and then, instead of receiving a fee, the process was to be reversed, and the cripple was to get twenty-five rupees instead of his limb.

“An awfully good case,” said the doctor to Paul Stanford, “I wish you would come and see me take it off.”

“No, thank you,” said Paul, “the interest would not extend itself to me.”

But the doctor's delight was unbounded when he saw Jorawur, the very case he had been longing for. Had he not bothered the Magistrate for weeks with

inquiries as to whether any faithless women had been deprived of their noses, by their irate spouses, a common form of punishment in those parts. Here was a splendid case, one for the lancet; he begged Paul to make a sketch of the Shikari, in his noseless condition, and again another when the operation was finished, and as Paul had positively refused to make a picture of the amputated leg before mentioned, he agreed in this case, and then Jorawur was put under treatment. He submitted cheerfully, for the condition of his face was a great trouble to him. Most natives bear these things apathetically, and go about exhibiting the most frightful deformities, with indifference; but Jorawur was sensitive, and therefore, when the English doctor declared he could make him a new nose, he put himself at once into his hands. Suffice it to say, the operation was a complete success, an artificial nose made of some indestructible composition was fitted on his face, and then the doctor, taking a v-shaped piece of skin from his forehead, turned it down over the model, leaving the skin attached at the narrow



part, and in time it began to grow over, and heal up, and so Jorawur Shikari got his nose again; and as for the scar on his forehead, he did not mind that, for he used to plaster a lot of paint over it, and so passed for a very high caste man amongst the uninitiated.

The Haji had been promoted to be Jemadar of Chupprasis, or chief of the Orderlies, and Mr. Lufton had also made arrangements for the purchase for him of a confiscated estate, which had been put up to auction. The old man at first firmly declined the gift. What he had done was for conscience sake, and not for reward, and he was too old now to turn to the axe and the plough, when his hand had become hardened in the sword-hilt. But his master reminded him that he had now a daughter, that he was not alone in the world, and that Grace was indebted also to Abdul, as well as to him, and therefore as the estate would go to Fazilla, it would make her and her husband comfortably off. The old man on this relented, and growling forth a benediction on the heads of his master and young mistress, began thereafter with some degree of com-

placency to look upon himself as a landed proprietor. The purchase-money had not been much, a few hundred pounds, although the estate comprised about 4000 acres; it was subject to an annual rent-charge to Government, but this was fixed at so low a rate as to leave ample profit to the holder.

But since the Haji had received the letter from Sasseram, he thought little of estates, or a life of easy and honourable servitude; the old mood came upon him, and the idea that he was bound to do something for the cause of his religion, before he died, became intensified.

“Am I to die on a bed amid the lowing of cows and bleating of sheep? never, it is not in my fate. I have a work in hand, which must be done, and that not with hoe and spade. Allah will provide the instrument.”

So the old man took his staff, and girded up his loins for the long journey to Sasseram.

The parting between father and daughter was affecting.

“We shall never meet again, my child,” he murmured as he stroked her head. “I

know we shall not, it is the will of Allah, but thou wilt give a thought occasionally to the rough old man that loved thee, ay, and thy mother before thee. It is for thy sake I go, to rid thee of a great danger, and to make thy after-life smooth with the husband of thy choice, and the wealth with which kind friends have endowed thee."

Then he blessed her with repeated blessings, her and her protectors, and went forth on his undertaking. Fazilla parted from him with mingled feelings of regret, and yet relief. She sorrowed to lose him, for now that Abdul was away, he was the one who loved her most, the one of her own race; and after all he was her father. Again, she dreaded lest he should find out her conversion before Abdul's return. His pious exhortations and his enthusiasm for his religion alarmed her, she could not follow him in his prayers; she had long given up repeating the *kalma* or creed, which enjoins that there is no God but one, and Mahomed is his prophet, and she dreaded being found out in her surreptitious reading of the New Testament. Therefore, his departure had to a

certain extent the balm of security, at all events for a time.

From Abdul she heard occasionally, but more frequently of him from Grace, as Fred wrote at times to his uncle or Pat Conolly, or Col. Burton to Paul, but all spoke alike of him—the best native that ever breathed, quiet and unassuming, yet foremost in every fray. He had been twice slightly wounded, had a horse shot under him, had rescued at the risk of his life an officer who had been knocked over by the rebels, and had in consequence been twice promoted and recommended for the Order of Merit, a decoration rarely given to so young a man. He was now a Jemadar or native Lieutenant, and there was some prospect of his getting his troop as Ressaldar in another year, and then he would be the youngest, though bravest, Ressaldar in the Indian Army. It is not to be supposed that he got these steps within a few months without causing jealousy and heart-burnings amongst those of his regiment, who thought their claims had been overlooked, but then the majority of the men were in his favour, and he had the support of all the European

officers, so the few malcontents grumbled at their fate, while they accepted their position, hoping that some day a rash adventure might put an end to Abdul, and give them the coveted promotion.



## CHAPTER VIII.

MUNSHI Karīm-ullah Khan Bahadur, Deputy Magistrate of the first class, the favoured of the English and the feared of his own people, was in no placid frame of mind about this time. His ambition had placed him on a dizzy height, comparatively speaking, with regard to his countrymen and kinsfolk, but the blood of his victims made the footing slippery.

Some of his favourite plans had miscarried, and their failure had produced a certain amount of danger. Then his personal feelings had sustained a blow in the loss of Fazilla, for now lost she was to him. With the powerful English friends she had made, it was hopeless for him to think of carrying his persecution any further; but there was one thing he would not forego, and that was his revenge.

If the girl despised him, she signed her

own death-warrant; to that he had made up his mind.

Let her but return to the Hakīm's house in Sasseram, and that beardless boy, Abdul, at the thought of whom Karīm-ullah ground his teeth, might go and mourn his lost love in dust and ashes.

The Deputy was facile in expedients, he knew where to lay his hands upon old men and old women, grown grey in every species of vice, familiar with every trick of poison and devilry, on whose services he could count with blind fidelity, as he held in his hands proofs of their guilt, which would send them any day to the gallows, from which he spared them for his own sinister purposes. Since he had arrayed himself against the Wahabi, his uncle had entirely held aloof from him, and there was now no intercourse between the two.

The old man kept on unwaveringly in his profession, making no secret of it, and continuing in his former charity and ministrations to the sick. The loss of their young people had borne heavily on him and his wife, for a time, but since the news of Fazilla's discovery and escape, and Abdul's safety, for which many were the alms and

oblations offered up in gratitude, cheerfulness had come back to their hearts. They knew now that their happy reunion was but a question of time. They only feared the Munshi, there was no knowing what that bad man might not do, for bad they all felt him to be, and old Amīrun made no scruples about declaring it.

“He can’t eat me for saying what I think, and if he were to come here I’d tell him to his face.”

Bold man as Karīm-ullah was, we doubt whether he could have stood a few volleys from old Amīrun. She was as crabbed as ever, but she was never tired of praising Abdul and Fazilla, and that went to the old people’s hearts.

But after all it was but all snarl and bark, there was no bite about her; and she was faithful to the family, as the Munshi had long since found out when he tried to tamper with her.

Many were the prayers offered up by the pious physician for his erring nephew and brother; for the latter was so puffed up with conceit at his son’s position, that he had also estranged himself from his family. The witty Sarogah used to tell a facetious

little allegory with reference to them. The tiger used to kill cows, and walked home every night with distended paunch; the jackal having feasted on the remains, waddled after him in a similarly gorged condition. "Dear friend," said a lean companion, on meeting him one day, "how fat you are getting." "Yes," replied the other haughtily, "think of the number of cows we kill for our dinners."

The general indignation against the Munshi culminated, when one day the venerable Hakim's dwelling was searched for treasonable Wahabi correspondence, and the old man himself was called up to the Sudder Station to answer a charge of having harboured a Wahabi leader.

Munshi Karim-ullah swore that he had no hand in this matter, and even went so far as to declare that it was owing to his personal influence the old man escaped, but people did not believe him. The aspect of the accused man, his simple assertion without any kind of prevarication, and the high character which every class and creed of natives pressed forward to give him, and this at a time when men were afraid to speak up for father, son, or

brother who had fallen under the ban of suspicion of disloyalty to the Government, spoke alone in his favour, without any influence of Karīm-ullah's, which, in fact, was never exerted. The old man was acquitted, and received back in his native town with universal acclaim,—Sunis, Shiahs, and Hindus alike, vying with Wahabis to welcome him back.

Karīm-ullah was therefore beginning to find his place getting too hot for him; but he was a man not likely to court popular feeling unless popular feeling was a step towards advancement. In a case of Government *versus* the people, it was a case of who was the strongest; it appeared to him that the Government was the strongest, therefore he went against his people; otherwise, for some time, Karīm-ullah was like the bat in the fabled war between the birds and the quadrupeds, he hovered aloof, ready to throw in his lot with the winning side.

At one time, however, the prospects of the Government seemed so dark as to justify the Deputy in making overtures to the other side, and now he felt uneasy, lest he had gone too far—though he had taken

every precaution; and think over the matter as he would, he could not remember any document in which he had seriously committed himself. He had never signed his name to anything, and the Persian character, in which he wrote, is not a hand in which experts can take oath to individual peculiarities. Of the evidence of men against him he was less afraid. The only one who was thoroughly acquainted with his designs was the Nawab Hyder Ali, and it was extremely improbable that he would ever come forward to implicate him. Those of his neighbourhood who were leaders of the revolutionary party had been betrayed by him as soon as their cause declined, and they had suffered the extreme penalty of the law, and so were removed from his way.

Therefore, what had he to fear? Nevertheless, he had a growing feeling of disquietude, and a vague sense of impending danger, which gave a bitterness to the cup of life, which, to all appearance, had been filled with nectar for him.

All the conditions of the horoscope cast at his nativity had hitherto been fulfilled, and under the benign planet Jupiter, he

had attained the promised ascendancy over his fellows, but there was that doubtful impinging on the hour presided over by Mars. Was that, after all, the star which had been ruling him ?

The Munshi opened a work on Astrology, and looked up Jupiter. He read,—“ He shall never want for food ; shall be good-looking, learned, a judge ; a ruler of people, distinguished in science and politics, overcoming his enemies ; none will be ever able to hurt him, firm, high-spirited, persevering, and charitable.”

In some ways this suited him, now what about Mars ?

“The dispositions of Mars are—tyrannical, quick, easily irritated, fond of white apparel and perfumes, acquainted with the arts and sciences, earnestly desirous of gaining knowledge, most ambitious, much inclined to deprive his neighbour of his money and hoard it up for himself.”

The Munshi threw aside the book with a harsh laugh.

The cap fitted.

“ It little matters,” he said to himself, “ which star it was, let old women frighten themselves about horoscopes, a man’s

destiny is worked out by his own brave heart and stout arm, and not by tricks of priestcraft and superstition."

The Deputy was in his study, or private office-room, in his little bungalow, whilst this question of horoscopes was agitating his mind; and an orderly peon was sitting at the door, waiting his master's orders. He had just laid aside his astrological work, when he heard a voice inquiring for him of his orderly.

"Could he see the Deputy Sahib," asked the voice.

"No, he could not; the Deputy Sahib was busy. What was his business?"

The expected coppers were not forthcoming, but the voice again in a somewhat peremptory tone replied, "that he wished to see the Deputy Sahib, and his business was with him alone."

Karim-ullah got up and peeped out of a side-window into the verandah.

There was a tall man dressed like an Afghan, with loose flowing garments, and snaky ringlets hanging down from under his voluminous turban.

The Munshi had never seen him before, to the best of his recollection, but thinking



he might be an emissary from some of his dangerous friends, he thought it best to see him at once, and face his danger if there were any; so he went out.

The man salaamed respectfully on the Deputy's approach, and begged that he might have a little private conversation. So the Munshi admitted him to his room, and bade his orderly go out and shut the door.

As soon as they were alone, the stranger removed his wig and beard.

"Beni Sing!" exclaimed the astonished Munshi.

The other held up a warning finger, and looked uneasily around.

"It is all right," carelessly answered the other, "there is no one within earshot, so say on."

"Well, I don't exactly wish it to be proclaimed from the house-top, that I am here," replied Beni Sing. "I had to come back into this part of the country to recover some money, times are hard now."

"They are indeed," said the Munshi.

"Ay, ay, but you are comfortable enough, Munshi Sahib, it is a poor wretch like myself that is to be pitied, hunted from place

to place, with a large reward offered for one's head. One's only satisfaction is, one is so valuable." And the freebooter chuckled at his own conceit.

"Yes, I wonder at your venturing into my den, Beni Sing."

"Oh, I am safe enough with you, Dipty Sahib," carelessly replied the other. "For you know if you played me false, they would have to prepare gallows for two, your honour and myself."

The Munshi turned green with fear, but for a moment only; he then haughtily answered,—

"I think you overrate your power to do me harm, my good man. Suppose now, for instance, I were in want of money, and the reward for you were to come in handy. What could you do if I had you arrested?"

"Do," replied the outlaw boldly, "I should accept my fate, and swing; but how would your honour clear yourself from the abduction of that girl, coupled with the fact of your sending her to the head-quarters of that most notorious rebel, Hyder Ali, in proof of which I have documentary evidence, in the shape of one of your honour's letters to the said Nawab?"

“You have one of my letters,” gasped Karīm-ullah, “how do you know it is mine?”

“Well, it is not signed, but it acknowledges the Nawab’s letter announcing the arrival of the girl, and it advises him to smite, and spare not the station of Amānpur, and gives news concerning the movements of troops, therefore, Munshi Sahib, when they put this and that together, it might be unpleasant for your lordship.”

If Karīm-ullah could have annihilated the Dacoit then and there, he would have at once done so, but it was necessary to temporize, and, above all, get possession of the letter. So he adopted an unconcerned tone, saying,—“Well, well, it does not much matter as we are not going to quarrel, Beni Sing. Now give me the news; where is Jeswunt?”

“Dead!”

“Dead!” echoed the Munshi, thinking with satisfaction to himself, “well there is one troublesome fellow the less.”

The outlaw gave a rapid sketch, to which the Munshi listened with the gravest attention, of all the events that had occurred.

“When the Nawab Sahib fled from the fort of Asālgurh, most of the garrison went out with the Rani, but I with my band remained behind.”

“To see what you could loot,” interrupted the Deputy.

“Just so,” replied Beni Sing, unmoved, “and it was in looting the Nawab’s rooms I picked up your honour’s letter. As I wanted a bit of paper to wrap up a trinket in, I brought it with me, thinking your lordship might wish to redeem it.”

“You are a regular trader, Beni Sing,” exclaimed Karīm-ullah with a forced smile. “What else have you brought to barter?”

“Nothing else so valuable to you, Munshi Sahib.”

“Pshaw! do you take me for an old woman, to be frightened by a bit of paper, the whole thing may be a forgery.”

“Would you like to see it?”

“Have you it here?” eagerly demanded the Deputy;—a loaded revolver lay within arm’s length of him, and dead men are safe; it would be easy to make out a story. The man being the notorious Beni Sing simplified the matter; it would be easy to say he tried to murder him, and was shot

in self-defence. But the design, rapidly as it flashed through Karim-ullah's brain, fell to the ground, as the outlaw replied with the utmost nonchalance, losing not a jot of the other's excitement,—

“No, Karim-ullah Sahib, I have it in safe keeping, but I thought your honour would like to refresh your memory with a copy, and here it is.”

The Munshi glanced with disgust at the scrap of paper. Would it not be well to shoot this man on the spot? He had not acquitted himself with his usual coolness and tact, and the Dacoit knew it. Again he thought it would be better to come to terms about the letter. So he asked Beni Sing how much he would take for it.

“Two thousand rupees,” was the laconic answer.

“Two thousand rupees,” echoed the Deputy; “impossible! I have not got such a sum.”

The outlaw gave an incredulous laugh, and said,—

“Little enough, too, to save a man of your position from the hangman.”

The Munshi winced, he did not like this sort of pleasantry.

“ I will give you five hundred,” he said.

“ And I swear by Parvati I will not take a pice less than two thousand.”

“ Beni Sing, be reasonable, think of the many friendly acts I have done you.”

“ True, Sahib, but you would not have done them had I not been of some use to you. Beni Sing is not a blind *tattu*, that he cannot see which side of the road the ditch is.”

“ Take a thousand, Beni.”

“ And perjure myself before holy Durga, whom I have called to witness that I will not take less than two thousand rupees? Nay, I’ve said my say, and if your lordship is not willing, I’ll go.”

“ Well, how am I to get this letter if I give you the two thousand?”

“ Bring out the money to me in gold mohurs, rupees are too heavy, and meet me to-morrow evening on the open plain where the old *Barr* tree is. Your honour knows the spot, and on open ground we can arrange our business best, for your worship need not bring any of your myrmidons to capture me, and you will see that I am also alone.”

“ It will do very well, it shall be done,”

replied the Munshi, with decision. The thought flashed over him again, that the revolver might do its work effectively there, and so he again assented, with a sense of grim satisfaction that he had got his friend at last.

Beni Sing resumed his beard and wig, and as he turned to go out, he said,—

“By-the-bye, Dipty Sahib, do you want to catch another rebel to hang, to your own great honour and glory with the Angrese Sirkar Bahadur?”

“Who is it?”

“Who is it? why it is that old Wahabi follower of the Nawab Hyder Ali, who turned traitor, and helped the young ladies to escape from Asālgurh. I owe him a grudge myself, for since the time I sent him off a prisoner, in charge of my best man, Juggernath Sing, I have not seen the latter.”

“Where is he?” asked the Munshi.

“Ask your uncle,” replied the Dacoit.

“He harbours all the Wahabis.”

With that he walked out of the room, leaving the Deputy busy with own bewildering thoughts.

## CHAPTER IX.

KARĪM-ULLAH was not a coward, and he rode out to meet the outlaw at the appointed time with the full intention of shooting him. He was a fair shot with a revolver and had practised frequently at a short range in his garden. His intention was therefore to get the letter, pay over the money, and then shoot the Dacoit dead on the spot. And he had no anticipation of failure.

The place of rendezvous was a solitary banyan-tree which stood in an open patch of fallow land near the foot of the hills.

It was well chosen by the suspicious robber chief, for he could not be taken unawares. And it had the same advantage for the Munshi.

As, however, Karīm-ullah rode up to the tree, no Beni Sing was to be seen.



Had the man played him false? He scanned the plain, but there was no sign of him. Yet there was some one under the tree. A small ragged urchin of about twelve was sitting there, passing time by playing with half a dozen small pebbles, at a game resembling knuckle-bones.

The Mannikin rose as the Munshi approached, and, throwing his pebbles aside, made the Deputy Magistrate a profound bow.

He was a queer-looking little wretch, like a little old wizened man, with a puckered up little face which reflected cunning and preternatural decision of character ; and as he stood blinking at the Deputy with his little bleary eyes, Karim-ullah felt he had been outwitted by the Dacoit. This was Beni Sing's emissary.

"Who are you?" demanded the Munshi.

"Your honour's slave," replied the squeaky little voice.

"Yes, yes, but what are you doing here? who sent you?"

"Your slave is the servant of Jemadar Beni Sing, and he sent me with many compliments and excuses to your lordship,

saying that he has got fever this afternoon, and could not wait upon your honour himself. But that your slave was to receive from your lordship the sum of two thousand rupees in gold mohurs, and deliver to your honour a letter."

"Have you brought the letter?" demanded Karim-ullah, thinking it would be easy to wrest the prize from the sprite, and send him off without its price; but the urchin could hardly repress a grin as he replied, "No, my lord, when I have got the gold, I am to give your worship the clue as to where the letter is to be found, but I have it not with me."

"Where is it?"

"That I can only say after the price has been delivered."

"Supposing I kill you if you do not tell."

"Your honour can do so if you please, but then you will lose the letter."

"Supposing I give you a thousand rupees for yourself, and take you away to live with me, and make a great man of you."

"Then the Jemadar Sahib would kill me, and I have never known him to fail

in killing any one who played him false."

Karim-ullah did not like the thought of this, but he passed it off with a laugh.

"Verily," he said, "Beni Sing hath found a staunch ambassador. Well, my lad, I suppose I must make over the money to you."

"Yes, one hundred and eight mohurs, five rupees, ten annas, at the exchange of the day," glibly replied the boy.

"Humph," returned the Deputy, "you've got it all at your finger ends. See here is a bag with one hundred and nine mohurs, will you count them?"

"Your lordship's counting is not to be questioned," answered the urchin with a deferent bow.

"The young fox," thought the Munshi, who, though savage at being duped, still could not help admiring the coolness of the young ruffian.

"Well, little Mahajau, how about this letter?"

"Your lordship shall be told. Just before you left the highway, you passed through a grove of palm-trees. Begin and count from the last tree on this side as

you return, and in the one which I shall tell you, you will find on a level with your chin a small hole bored, and filled up with clay, a tag of a thread hangs from it; pull this, and out will come a reed, in this reed is the letter."

"Yes, but the number of the tree."

"Ah! I can only tell that under certain conditions, that is, your honour must let me retire to the top of yonder hillock, and then count how many times I hold up my right hand."

"Yes, and let you run off with the money before I have got my letter, a very likely story."

"Then if your honour won't trust me, you had better take back the bag," replied the boy demurely.

"What if I do," said the Munshi, "and have each tree examined in detail?"

"You will never find the letter," positively asserted the lad, "for I have not told you all. I thought you might play me a trick."

"Well, you are a little imp of Satan! be off with you, but mind if you play any tricks I'll ride you down and shoot you."

The lad grinned and started.

When he got about twenty yards away, he turned and shouted,—

“The hole is at the back of the tree, and you must knock all over it till you hit the bit of bark which sticks to the clay covering the hole.”

“That is why he said I should never find it,” thought the Deputy, as the boy ran for the hillock. As soon as he reached it, he faced about and up went an arm.

“One, two, three, four,” counted the Munshi on to seventeen, and then the urchin darted into the jungle and disappeared.

Karim-ullah rode homewards in no enviable frame of mind. He had been outdone in cunning by the Dacoit, and by such an agency—a shrimp of a child—a veritable child of Satan, it was true; but for a man of his stamp to be so taken in was gall and wormwood, and he swore he would be revenged on Beni Sing some day.

He had little fear of the letter not being found, for he knew the character of the man, and was certain he would fulfil faithfully his part of the contract. But what a price he had been made to pay for his in-

discretion! It was to be hoped that no more of his letters were in existence.

He entered the palm-tree avenue, he counted up to the seventeenth tree and dismounting he went to the back of it. Carefully tapping about with the handle of his whip, a small piece of bark dropped off and disclosed a patch of clay, from the centre of which depended the end of a piece of twine. On pulling this, out came a short piece of hollow cane, inside which tightly rolled up he found his letter. Hurriedly glancing at it to see that it was genuine, he again mounted his horse and rode home easier in his mind, but savage at the loss of two thousand rupees and the failure of his design against the outlaw, for whom, with all his cunning, he had not proved a match.

The next question that agitated the Munshi's mind was what to do about the Haji. He was perturbed about his return, and he was uneasy at the thought of any one who had been connected with the Nawab Hyder Ali, and who in fact knew that there was or had been a friendship subsisting between the two, being so near to him, yet there were several reasons for

not taking decisive steps against him. In the first place he was under his uncle's roof, and Karīm-ullah had already incurred much popular odium by his supposed connexion with the Hakim's arrest. Secondly, he had some difficulty in establishing a charge against him. His only witness could not be produced, for Beni Sing was not likely to come forward.

But the Haji must be got rid of some how. Beni Sing would be useful here, but now that Jeswunt was dead, the Deputy could not get hold of the outlaw whenever he wanted him.

In the meantime, however, he would take no notice of the information he had received, and as he never went near his uncle's house it was not likely he would meet the Haji; then if anything happened to him suspicion could not attach itself to Karīm-ullah.

As he was about to turn into his own garden he met an old woman hobbling along, who bade him *sālām*, with a quavering voice.

She was one of the Deputy's instruments, and his agent in many a low, disreputable, if not criminal action.

On ordinary occasions she would not have dared to address him, nor would he have noticed her. But he was alone, and no one being near, he accepted her salutation, and even stopped to speak to her.

The old woman was reputed to be learned in magic, in the art of casting out and putting in devils, in love philters and poisons, charms and amulets. It was by these means she gained a livelihood, though most of her deeds, or at any rate the most paying ones, were such as would bring her within the clutch of the law as administered by the British. Fortunate for her, however, the only magistrate who knew of her secret trade was the Munshi, and he found her useful.

“I shall want you, Maie, soon to do something for me.”

“Your slave-girl is at your feet whenever you send for her, my lord.”

“Can I trust you to poison any one in such a way as not to be found out?”

“Did I not poison that chit of a girl for your lordship.”

“Bah! that was only a girl, and little fuss is made about a woman, but this is a man, and a man of character too.



“Character and strength avail nothing,” replied the old hag with a wolfish grin, “against one little tiny powder on a few drops of the juice of a plant. The serpent stings, and the lordly elephant falls. All things are easy to those who have knowledge.”

“Then you will undertake the task?”

“Your lordship will pay well? I did not get half enough for that girl, and then there was the child to kill too, for which I charged nothing.”

“Don’t prate, like an old fool, always bringing up that girl. You were paid handsomely, and ought to be thankful I did not hang you afterwards, for that and several other little things of the same kind.”

“Nay, my lord,” said the old woman deprecatingly. “I meant no offence, your lordship is as generous as Hatin Tai, and it is by your good fortune that your slave-girl lives.”

The Munshi, somewhat mollified, went on to say, “Well, well, I forgive you, only be careful how you talk. Now, listen, there is an old man living at my uncle’s.”

“I know him,” exclaimed the old woman.

“You know him !” returned Karim-ullah, with astonishment. “Why, how do you come to know him ?”

“Nay, I don’t know him personally, but I see him every morning ; he has only been here three days, and every morning before sunrise he walks to the palm grove beyond my house and buys a cocoa-nut,—there are a few cocoa-nut trees there beside palms,—and drinks the milk.”

“That man is an enemy to us all,” said the Munshi solemnly. “He is a dangerous Wahabi.”

“Astagfurullah !” ejaculated the old hag piously.

“Yes, my poor uncle is, I am sorry to say, one of that misguided sect, and it is by the counsels of such men as this that he has been misled. This man has lately been consorting with rebels, and is moreover a personal enemy of mine, so I must take precautions. I would rather remove him quietly, and you might be able to do it.”

“My lord, if he were left to me, I could cause him to die so naturally that even the all-knowing English doctors could not say that he had not died of disease.”

And the old woman fairly chuckled with delight at her profession of murder as a fine art.

Even the hardened Deputy could scarcely repress a feeling of disgust and loathing at this old reptile in human form, spitting forth, as it were, venom.

But he recovered, and nerved himself once more.

“Very good, then you could do it, but how? Can you get access to him?”

“Has not his fate led him into our hands? what does he go forth every morning and buy cocoa-nuts for? I will meet him and sell him a cocoa-nut, the milk of which will speedily remove him from your lordship’s path. But your slave-girl must be well paid, protector of the poor.”

“Well paid! what do you call well paid, how much?”

“A thousand rupees.”

“Too much, I can only give five hundred; and that is more than you deserve.”

“Think of the risk, my lord.”

“Bah! there is no risk. From your own showing the thing is simple enough, and no one would suspect you with your green cocoa-nut.”

“But the sin, my lord! I shall have to give alms and oblations to expiate the sin.”

“Get out, you hardened old sinner, to talk of such rubbish! sin indeed! do you not know that he who slays an infidel performs a meritorious action, and what is a Wahabi but worse than an infidel. A perverted Mussulman, for whom the fires of Jehannum are made seventy times hotter than for the worst Kafir.”

“I am not book-learned like you, Munshi Sahib, so I know nothing about these things, but the risk is great, *bapre!* and I am but an old woman. Your lordship should give me more than five hundred. Think of the benefit to yourself.”

“Never mind the benefit to myself, that is neither here nor there, it may be or it may not be that I personally shall derive any benefit from this man’s death. I work for the benefit of the State, as well as for my own, and so that is out of the question, which is,—will you do what I want for five hundred, or not?”

“As your lordship pleases to order,” replied the old woman, with an air of submission.

“Well then, when I hear that the deed is done, I will give you five hundred.”

“You will swear on the Quran, Munshi Sahib?” eagerly demanded the old poisoner.

“I swear on the Quran, and the tomb of the holy Shah Kutub-ud-din,” replied the Deputy fervently.

Not that Karim-ullah had any more reverence for Shah Kutub-ud-din than he had for a cat, but he knew that that particular saint was most venerated by the people of the neighbourhood, so he took him as the best for his purpose.

“My lord, it shall be done.”

“Very well,” replied the Munshi, turning into his garden gate.

He had got his letter back, though he had to pay heavily for it, and he had arranged for the disposal of his enemy, so he felt more inclined to enjoy his dinner than he had done on the previous evening.

At the verandah steps he found a man waiting with a letter.

The Deputy took it. It was in the Persian character, and a frown deepened over his face as he read.

Turning to the messenger, he said,—  
“Give my sālām, and say it shall be done  
as desired.”

Somehow the temporary elation of spirits had left him. He ate his dinner in moody silence, and spent the evening in his study. About ten o'clock he rose, looked to the priming and loading of his revolver, cast a dark choga over him, and went out quietly and alone.

## CHAPTER X.

MR. LUFTON was perplexed and worried ; he had turned out the contents of every desk, drawer, box of papers, and portfolio in his office-room without success.

He had got evidence connecting the Munshi Karīm-ullah with the abduction of Fazilla, and the letter to the Nawab Hyder Ali furnished the proof of his treachery towards the Government.

But where was the letter ?

Mr. Lufton remembered having had it three days before, attentively perusing it, and checking every expression most critically, but he had been called away for a minute, and then detained some time by a visitor, and now the principal evidence in the case could not be found.

It was most mysterious, and provoking.

Without the letter he could do nothing, beyond charging the Munshi with the abduc-

tion of the girl, and that would be only on the deposition of one or two witnesses, but in the letter there were certain allusions which corroborated the evidence, and fixed on him not only the crime of abduction, but the still more serious crime, at that time, of treason to the State.

Mr. Lufton was very much annoyed, he blamed himself for carelessness in mislaying so important a document. However, he had done everything he could to find it, and after many hours' search he reluctantly gave up the quest for the day.

Through the instrumentality of Jorawur Shikari, another of Beni Sing's band had been captured.

Jorawur's instincts as a hunter were keener than those of an ordinary government peon, and at times he would get leave from his master for a day or two, to scour the hills for game. Often Paul would go out and take him with him, for Jorawur was a keen and reliable Shikari, so after a time the hills and valleys around Amānpur were pretty well harried, and it became necessary to look further afield. Jorawur got a week's leave to go on an exploring



expedition, and when he returned he produced with triumph a captive of his bow and spear, a prisoner, one of Beni Sing's band.

It was in a valley between two low ranges of hills, about ten miles from Amānpur, that Jorawur was following the slot of a deer, when, on a grassy knoll under the shade of some thickly foliated *Eugénias*, the Shikari found a man fast asleep.

“A glance showed him this was one of Beni Sing's band, one of those who had stood by, and jeered him as the Nawab's men deprived him of his nose and ears.

Forgetful of the stag and all beside, Jorawur dropped behind a bush and on his hands and knees watched, like a lynx, his slumbering foe.

No true Shikari goes on a hunting expedition without some string or rope, and Jorawur had a coil of the latter, thin but strong, wound round his waist.

Preparing a slip knot and loop, he silently crawled, snake-like, to the sleeper, and noiselessly removed his sword and the matchlock which lay beside him.

Then lightly passing the loop over the outlaw's feet, he drew the noose tight ; the

man sprang up with a yell, but the Shikari was more than a match for him, and crippled as he was by the loss of his legs, the Dacoit was pinned to the ground staring, open mouthed and open eyed, at Jorawur, whom he now recognized.

But his nose!

Where had it come from?

“Ah ha, Bhai! so you know me now!” exclaimed Jorawur, holding him down.

It was his voice, there was no doubt of his identity, it was Jorawur.

But his nose, how had it grown again?

The Shikari gave him little time for wonderment, for with wonderful dexterity he hitched the rope round his arms, and in spite of his struggles the Dacoit was a helpless prisoner.

Having secured his man very much after the fashion of the tying of the Davenport brothers, Jorawur propped him up against a tree and squatted down in front of him, saying,—

“Now Bhai, as you are comfortable, let us have a talk. How have you all been since that night you behaved so kindly to me? you did not suppose my nose would grow again, did you?”

“Arré! Jorawur Bhai, what have I done to you that you should treat me in this manner? Have we not smoked our pipes together for so long? and now you play me this trick.”

“I am a government servant now, Harri Sing Bhai, and you know it is my duty to catch all badmashes, and then we hang them.”

“Arré Ram! duhai! Ram duhai, you will surely not do so, Jemadar Sahib,” pleaded the frightened wretch. “I will give you three hundred rupees if you will let me go; do, Jemadar Sahib, as you are strong be merciful, and don’t give me over to the Sirkar.”

“And how about my nose, Bhai?”

“Arré! Sahib, I had nothing to do with your honour’s nose, I had not indeed, I felt so sorry, and would have helped you if I could, but what could I do when the Nawab Sahib himself ordered it to be done, and his men did it.”

“Yes, yes, but you need not have laughed, Bhai, I think I may as well see how you would like your nose cut off,” and here Jorawur drew a long knife, and picking up a large smooth agate pebble, such as

are common in the trap formation of that part of the country, began carefully to sharpen the edge thereof.

“You know, Bhai,” continued he in a soliloquizing sort of tone, as he drew the blade of his knife with rapid strokes over the stone and felt the edge with his thumb, “You know it won’t spoil your beauty for long, for you will be hung almost immediately after we get to the station. The Sahibs don’t keep rebels long on trial just now, and you have no idea how funny it feels. Now, Bhai!”

And rising he took his prisoner by the nose and flourished the blade across the eyes.

The poor wretch gave a despairing howl, and made a further pitious appeal for mercy.

Jorawur rather enjoyed this species of torture, but he had not the least intention of carrying out his threat, knowing well that his master would punish him for such an act of cruelty, were he to take his prisoner in maimed. The question for a short time with him had been whether to carry out a revenge that would have been dear to his soul, that of serving him as he had been served, or to convey him to the

station and deliver him up to the authorities. The moment of indecision was, however, but a short one. Jorawur knew that the production of his captive would be certain promotion to him, and he would after all have the satisfaction of seeing him hung, so he decided on taking him in, but he could not resist a little mental torture, hence the pantomime with the knife.

However, the Shikari did not care to waste much time over him, as he did not know whether some of his prisoner's comrades might not be in the vicinity, and know of his whereabouts, and so the next thing was to remove him.

This he accomplished by hoisting him on his back, the Dacoit being so bound as to be as helpless as a log; he did not intend to take him far, only far enough to baffle the others, should any of the band come after their comrade. He bore his burden to a small bush-covered ravine about five hundred yards off, and here he deposited him and told him he should leave him for a while, but before he did so he took the precaution of putting a gag into his mouth, to prevent his crying out.

Having left his prisoner comfortably

secured according to his own notions, but extremely uncomfortable according to those of the poor wretch operated upon, Jorawur made the best of his way towards a village whose chief was subject to the Nawab Eusuf Khan and friendly to the British Government, and getting aid from him he returned to his captive, who was hoisted on a light bullock-cart and brought in triumph to the station.

However, the Dacoit was not hung at once, for after a searching examination by Mr. Lufton, it appeared that he had accompanied Beni Sing and Jeswunt to the Munshi's house the night before Fazilla's abduction, and had helped them to carry home a heavy bag of rupees which they had received as the price of the transaction. The prisoner Harri Sing was a sort of cousin of the leader of the band, and had thus been taken more into his confidence than the others.

He was distinctly given to understand that the sparing of his life depended entirely on his giving evidence against the Munshi, and this he eagerly volunteered to do.

Mr. Lufton now thought he had enough

to bring against the treacherous Deputy Magistrate.

Harri Sing's positive evidence, Jorawur Shikari's hearsay and surmises at the time, and Paul and Abdul's testimony of the dying confession of Jeswunt Sing, all tended to connect Karim-ullah with the abduction, and then the rest was clear. The writer of the letter, who was the abductor was, by that document a proved traitor. But then, where was the letter?

No wonder Mr. Lufton was put out and worried by such a miscarriage; without the letter the treachery could not be proved.

However, nothing more could be done that day, on the morrow the search should be renewed; Grace had invited a few friends to dinner that evening.

Her father left it to her to dispense the hospitality the commissioner has to exercise, and which Mr. Lufton exercised in no niggardly spirit. There were periodical *burra khanas*, or big dinners, which were as stiff and formal as big dinners always are, in spite of all Grace's efforts to infuse a little life into them. But the small parties which were constantly given at the Residency were delightful reunions.

People were not expected to be in their best dresses and on their best behaviour, and after dinner the time passed rapidly with music and round games and charades, and the great aim of the commissioner and his daughter seemed to be to make every one feel at home. About a dozen people had been invited on this occasion.

“What amusements are you going to have to-night Gracie?” asked her husband as she was dressing for dinner.

“Oh, we are going to have a séance; old Major Philpot and his daughter are very strong on electro-biology and animal magnetism, and so forth, so I am going to ask them to do some table-turning.”

“The little Filly as they call her, is a bit of a blue, isn’t she?”

“Very much too blue for me, Paul; she has corrected me in natural history, mineralogy, botany, history, astrology, and I don’t know how many ologies, till I feel I am a little dunce.”

“Don’t like your blue girls,” grunted Paul shortly, giving his white tie a hitch that pulled it all awry. “Wouldn’t have married you, Gracie, if you had been perfect in all the ologies.”



“You silly old goosie, you’d have been too glad to get me on any terms,” replied the happy little wife, turning up her face to be kissed, as she arranged the rebellious tie for him.

“There now, if you had been a miserable, grumpy bachelor, you would have gone down to dinner with your bow at the back of your neck. And mind, sir, you rub up your ologies, for you have to take Miss Philpot in to dinner;—I purposely arranged it.”

“So be it,” answered Paul with a mock air of resignation, “but won’t I just trot the little Filly out, that’s all; it wants half-an-hour to dinner-time, so I think I’ll just go down to the library and turn out the Encyclopædia Britannica.”

“You’ll do nothing of the kind, sir, you’ll take your little wife down to the drawing-room like a good husband.”

“Well! of all the little Tartars I ever came across—”

“I am the worst; never mind, darling, it’s better than being a blue, and talking Encyclopædia Britannica to you all day.”

“You’re right, little woman, for once in a way, you’re right, so come along. I’ll

meet the little Filly with my native ignorance, and foil her with my natural stupidity.”

“Hush, Paul dear, don't speak so loud, here are the Philpots.”

As they entered the drawing-room by one door the major and his daughter came in by the other. The father was a little round barrel of a man, with large lustreless eyes, and a little round mouth that took the shape of an “O” as he spoke, giving him rather the aspect of a gasping cod-fish. The daughter, on the contrary, was slight and very fair, not pretty but very nearly so, her hair was too white, and she lacked eyebrows, otherwise, if she had availed herself of Madame Rachel's art, she would have been pretty, for she had a broad, low forehead, small straight nose, rather a large mouth, but with beautiful pearly teeth, and a well-shaped oval face. Her eyes were her chief feature; they were very large and very pale grey; eyes that when their owner was displeased, could gleam with an angry glitter like that of a snake, or swim with tears in a moment of tenderness. There was always a dreaminess about them, and some people thought they constituted her chief beauty.

Miss Philpot's manner was somewhat dreamy too, but she woke up to animation if any favourite topic were broached, when she would get nervously excited. One of her studies was electro-biology, in which her father, who had not her talents, foolishly, as Mr. Lufton thought, encouraged her.

He was a firm believer in the "Vril" power of his daughter, and accepted implicitly the little tricks of table-turning and planchette with which we are all familiar. Paul Stanford bowed gravely as the old major confidentially gave him to understand that his daughter was so powerful a medium, as to be able to move a heavy table, a bed, or piano, by simply placing a finger on the article.

"I hope we shall see some of Miss Philpot's wonderful power this evening."

"Ah, my dear Sir Paul, little things such as table-turning and so forth she may do, but the heavier things her doctor positively interdicts her from attempting, she gets so exhausted after the operation, all her strength—preternatural strength—goes out from her, and leaves her utterly prostrated, so I never allow her to try it now."

“Very wise indeed,” answered Paul “very wise; in this land of unlimited coolies, what’s the good of moving tables by oneself, either naturally or preternaturally. But it’s curious being able to do so.”

“Very extraordinary indeed,” said the little major, “where my girl gets the power from I don’t know. Her mother was a very different sort of person, and I haven’t got anything of the kind in me.”

The late Mrs. Philpot was rather a ditto to the major, being a little stouter if anything, and with a soul not much above making chutney and knowing how many yards of *do-suli* were required to make a dozen dusters.

Dinner having been announced, Paul went off to take charge of his young lady, and exchanged a knowing glance with his wife as he marched off with her to the dining-room. He found “the young Filly” as Miss Philpot was commonly called, not quite so easy to trot out as he had supposed; in fact she was rather reserved, as though she had divined his intention, and it was not till Paul mentioned his artist life to her that she

warmed up into an animated discussion regarding the ancient and modern painters.

Paul was astonished at the extent of her reading on the subject. It was that one of all others which he was, or ought to have been, most competent to talk about, yet he felt that she knew more about the history of painting than he did.

“Is this Vril power?” he thought to himself. “She is certainly a most extraordinary girl.”

Here he caught Grace’s eye as she was quietly observing him, with an amused expression, from the other side of the table, and gave her a slight comical grimace.

After dinner the ladies retired in the old-fashioned way, leaving the men to their wine and “shop talk,” which Anglo-Indians used to be more addicted to than they are now in these days of telegrams and weekly mails.

Smith, the deputy commissioner, tackled the doctor on the medical evidence in a late poisoning case, whilst Salthopper of the Inland Customs, argued the latest ruling of the Board of Revenue with Jones, the deputy collector. Young Trotman, of Major Philpot’s regiment, descanted to

Paul on the wonderful powers of Splatterdash, a recent purchase in horseflesh, whilst his commandant discussed with Mr. Lufton the breaking up of the Sepoy Mutiny.

In a short time a move was made to the drawing-room, from whence came sounds of music, as Mrs. Smith, who was a brilliant performer, rattled off some harmonic fireworks. After the arrival of the gentlemen a few songs were sung, then came a pause, such as will always happen even in the best regulated parties, a simultaneous, sympathetic pause, when everybody feels that some one ought to speak, and yet for the space of some seconds nobody does so.

It was then that Grace asked Miss Philpot if she would show them some of her marvellous power, of which they had heard so much.

The young lady laughed, and asked to be excused, but yielded on pressure, only making the condition that she was not asked to do anything that would overtax her strength, to which of course they assented.

“Well,” said she, “of course you all know such common things as table and hat-turning, so we need not try them, but I will

go out of the room, and you may hide anything wherever you like, and I will find it." She went out and Paul took a ring from his wife and put it under a vase on a side-table.

"Come in," shouted the major.

She entered.

"Now," said her father, "Lady Stanford, will you come here, and Mrs. Smith also. Now clasp my daughter round the waist with your hands, let the middle fingers touch, so, that's right now,—hush!"

Miss Philpot shut her eyes whilst her companions stood silently clasping her waist. Suddenly she began to sway backwards and forwards, then she took a step forward; then another, and another, all with an air of uncertainty.

Suddenly a burst of energy seemed to come upon her, and she started off at a pace with which her supporters could hardly keep up. She darted across the room and felt in the vase.

"It is here, I know," she said, "it is under this vase."

And Paul lifting it up acknowledged that it was so.

“Paul, Paul,” anxiously whispered Grace, “do you think she could find papa’s lost letter.”

“Per Bacco! that would be a good test indeed,” exclaimed her husband, “but then we have not got the letter to show her first, but we will ask her. Miss Philpot, Mr. Lufton has lost a very valuable document which he cannot find, could you find it for him without having seen it?”

“I could if one of my supporters has seen it.”

“I have seen it, and know exactly what it is like,” said Grace.

“Well, then, I think I could find it, but I am afraid it will try me severely. Is it really important?”

“Never mind, my dear,” said Mr. Lufton, “don’t try it if it will fatigue you. The document is important, but I should be sorry for you to tire yourself over it.”

“All right, Mr. Lufton, I see the paper is important; now let us try. Lady Stanford, will you hold me on one side. Sir Paul, you’re too much of a sceptic, I will not have you; but Mrs. Smith is sympathetic, she will do.”

This experiment called forth more inte-



rest than the other, for no one knew where the letter was.

After a long pause Miss Philpot began to be agitated and moved indefinitely about the room.

Her face wore a painful, distressed expression, her eyes were shut, her brows contracted. She pressed her hands against her forehead, and hesitated for a moment. Her father watched her anxiously, and every one was silent and expectant.

At once, as on the former occasion, inspiration seemed to come, for she darted on one side and at a rapid pace passed through the room, across the dining-room and into a little dressing-chamber belonging to Paul, where there was a little bookshelf. Without the least hesitation she went up to this, her eyes still closed, took down a volume of Donovan's Butterflies, and opening it took out a letter written in Persian character, on thin paper.

The guests had all followed her, and Mr. Lufton and Paul were astounded at the discovery.

A little diversion was caused by the poor girl sinking down in a fainting condition, and wine and water being sent for.

"It is a most extraordinary thing," remarked Mr. Lufton. "I felt sure I put it for a moment into a book, but how did it come into one of these books?"

"I think I can explain that," said Paul. "I was in your room in the morning looking up some of the butterflies we caught in the garden. Well, I went out for a while, leaving this volume of Donovan on your table. You were there then, but when I returned for my book you were absent. I took it up and put it on the shelf here, and never gave the subject another thought."

"And I in my hurry must have placed the letter in the first book at hand, intending to return in a few minutes, never suspecting that any book had been removed during my absence."

Miss Philpot had established her reputation, and the most sceptical of the people there assembled began to believe that after all there was something more than mere trickery in table-turning.

"I cannot understand it at all, Paul," said Grace, when they had retired for the night, "can you?"

"No, I wouldn't have believed it if I had not seen it. That girl gives one a

sort of creeping feeling. She's no canny, as the Scotch say. Just fancy my being the innocent cause of all the trouble and worry your father had."

"I am so glad that letter is found, now I hope that horrid man will be punished for his atrocious designs regarding poor little Fazilla."

Nemesis surely awaited the Munshi. He had paid his two thousand rupees in vain, for here was fresh and convincing documentary evidence of his guilt, just as fatal to him as that which he had regained and destroyed.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE old Hakīm Rehmat-ullah was in his little room, pondering over a complicated case of disease. The wife of an aged Hindu, herself an old woman, had been very ill with fever of an intermittent type, which had given way to the remedies employed by the Hakīm. But there were certain results which troubled the old physician, and great prostration, which rendered the case a difficult one. How he wished for his clever grandson, who could turn up for him in the English book which lay in the chest unused, the remedies that apply to those symptoms developed, which refused to give way to the native drugs and tonics.

What made this more distressing to the worthy Hakīm was, that the patient was a very poor woman, quite unable to remunerate him in any way for his trouble, and he

was sensitive lest people should say, in the event of her death, that he had not taken sufficient interest in her case as she could not afford to pay.

Not that people would have said so, for the unbounded charity of Sheikh Rehmatullah was too well known, but the old man was morbidly sensitive on this point. The poorer the patient, the more attention he gave him.

He was pondering over the advisability of administering so potent a drug as arsenic in very minute doses, which he had in similar cases prescribed with success, when a visitor was announced, and to the surprise and pleasure of the old physician, the Haji crossed the threshold with the customary Bismullah! Salam Ali Kum!

The old man sprang up and embraced his visitor with pious ejaculations, thanking Heaven for bringing him safe back.

The old Haji was visibly affected by the meeting, for his former admiration for the character of the old Hakim had deepened into a stronger feeling of affection for the man who had soothed the last hours of his dying wife, and had given a home and a father's care to his child.

After the first salutations, and invocations of Divine favour on the head of each, were over, the physician pressed his friend to take a seat, whilst he informed his wife of the Haji's advent, and told her to prepare suitable refreshment.

This done he returned, and a servant having brought water, he invited his guest to wash, and then partake of some light food whilst dinner was being prepared.

Whilst the Haji was at his ablutions, the Hakīm hurriedly prepared a bottle of physic for the old woman, and having delivered it to her husband, with minute directions as to its administration, returned to his friend.

After partaking of a few light confections, they sat down to talk of all that had happened, and the Haji had much to tell, which he did in a terse, forcible manner, characteristic of the man of action, not wasting too many words or giving way to exaggeration.

The only time when he showed any emotion, was when he poured forth his thanks to the old couple for their kindness to his wife and child. The rest of his story of excitement and peril was told, as if such

things were nothing in themselves, and he paid no heed to the ejaculations and exclamations of wonder and surprise that frequently burst from Sheikh Rehmatullah's lips.

The physician begged that his wife might hear from the Haji's own lips of the safety of the two children, as they called them, and the venerable Amina Bibi was called, and accommodated with a seat on the carpet.

Was not the Haji Sahib a brother to them, the husband of their dead sister, the father of their adopted daughter?

So the old man resumed his story and dwelt in commendatory tones on the bravery and intelligence of Abdul Rahim, effectually dispelling from the minds of the physician and his wife any idea they might have formed of late of possible objection on the part of the Haji to the match between his daughter and their grandson.

“As touching my conduct in allying myself to the Feringhis in this late conflict, I have much to say to thee, Hakīm Sahib, at a more convenient season. Meanwhile I may say, I am here on a holy mission, which will, by punishment of the guilty,

avenge many wrongs to our brethren of the faith who have suffered innocently, and bring peace to those we all love, and whilst I sojourn here for a few days I would, my friend, crave your hospitality."

"Which shall be given with pleasure, Haji Sahib, and indeed counted as an honour to your slave, whose life and goods are at your disposal, but I trust that it is not for a few days only that you will remain, nay, a month would be all too short a visit."

"Nay, friend, three or four days will suffice for my work, which I am impatient to perform, and those three days I must pass in prayer and fasting; therefore, oh friend, make not great preparation of food for me."

"Nay, but to-day your worship must partake of my poor fare, and then, if it be necessary to perform the task as an act of religion, far be it from me to oppose the pious intention. Nevertheless, the fast ended, I hope you will be pleased to honour me again."

The Haji acquiesced, and on that day had no reason to complain of scarcity of provisions, for he somewhat jocularly remarked to his host, that he was determined



to nullify the three days' mortification by such a preparatory feast. In the evening, the weather being somewhat chilly, the physician and his guest sat in the Dewan Khana, where coffee had been served to them, and the Haji, when he found themselves alone, said,—

“ Oh, friend Hakīm Sahib, I said to thee that at a more convenient season I would talk to thee more fully concerning my conduct with the Feringhis. Thou art a man of learning, and moreover one gifted of Allah with much discernment.

“ Thou mayest, therefore, fitly judge as to my action, whether I have been faithful or otherwise. Allah himself shall soon judge me of these matters, but it is the proper course to ask also of faithful and competent brethren, whether one hath walked in the straight path and not of those who go astray.

“ Know then first, that I came down from the north country with the intention of fighting against the English, for when I had lost my all, my wife, and my child and my property, I swore to devote my sword to Allah as a *ghazi*, and to die in the performance of some act ac-

ceptable to him. But I was not going to risk the martyr's crown by undertaking a service which was not in accordance with our holy religion, and knowing nothing of the Feringhis, I came to see for myself whether the war was a true *jihad* or not. For that reason I came down, and as you know, for the better understanding of the matter, I demeaned myself so far as to take service under one of these so-called enemies of our faith. And I found a man, honest, truthful, given to daily prayer, just and kind to all and specially tolerant to those of Islam. This I thought is an exceptional man, but on looking about for myself I found that, save for a proud and overbearing manner, the generality of this people were just and truthful in their dealings, and nowhere could I find the least oppression. Nay, in one case one of these men, now dead by the hands of the rebels, gave up a portion of his garden to the Mussulman people of the place because there was a tomb they regarded, after their manner, as a saint. True, amongst the military men, chiefly young ones, I found great laxity of morals and disregard of other's feelings, but as an old soldier I

know that such things will be amongst soldiers, but none could I find like the man whom I served."

"There are good and bad in all," said the Hakīm; "Allah in his inscrutable way, alloweth evil to darken one man's heart and virtue to shine forth out of another's. Learned men tell us that charcoal and the diamond are the same thing under different forms, so are the hearts of evil and good men. The one is destined in Allah's good time to burn in everlasting flames, the other to gleam in the heavens like a beautiful star."

"True, so I found that these people, though in many cases careless of their own religion, which in some points resembles ours, were not oppressors, but were careful to guard the rights and privileges of the Moslems in their sacred institutions, and therefore according to our holy Quran and the opinions of the most learned commentators, el Bokhari, we could not justifiably go to war with them. What do you say, Hakīm Sahib?"

"Well, I should have felt inclined to come to the same conclusion as yourself, and now I feel certain on the point, as my

own convictions have been confirmed by the opinion of the learned leader of our people, Maulavi Mahbub Ali—”

“Than whom no greater living authority exists,” interrupted the Haji. “May the blessing and peace of God rest upon him.”

“Amen, Amen,” replied the Hakīm, going on to say, “—which opinion was to the effect that the subjects of the British Government could not according to the precepts of their religion rise up against their rulers, and he refused to join the rebel chief Bukht Khan in preaching a jihad against the English. Maulavi Ismail Khan some years ago also gave the same opinion, yet,” continued the Hakīm sorrowfully, “the English think that we Wahabis are most opposed to them, and they persecute us accordingly. But time will clear us.”

“May it be so,” answered the Haji. “Well, my friend, it is also recorded of our holy Prophet, Mahomed Mousluffa, on whom be the blessing and peace of God that in attacking a foreign country, he waited to see whether the faithful were oppressed or fostered in that land, and if the latter he came to terms with the inhabitants.

Also when in trouble he confided his family to the care of the Christian King of Abyssinia, who faithfully fulfilled the trust. All these things have brought me to the conclusion, that we cannot regard the English as enemies. They are a peculiar people and their customs are very different from ours. Their women are more shameless, yet I have not found amongst them that immorality I should have expected from such freedom. The daughter of my master is a Fatima-tu-Zahura, the daughter of the prophet pre-eminent in all excellence, who when I was grievously ill of a fever nursed me as though I had been her father. Brave, learned, and gentle, our child Fazilla loves her beyond measure."

"May her lot on earth be blessed!" ejaculated the Hakim.

"Amen," replied the other, continuing, "Then you must know that at the fort of Asālgurh appeared as an envoy from the Emperor of Delhi, a man styled the Nawab Syed Hyder Ali, who at one time was a leader amongst us, a youth gifted with such parts as led all men to him by his zeal, piety, and daring, and to most of us he seemed the chosen instrument of Allah to carry

out to success the holy cause we had undertaken. I amongst others elected him as our leader, and swore allegiance to him after the manner of our own sect. It was with mixed feelings therefore that I received an order from him to join him at Asālgurh. I went, but I found not the pious exalted youth I had shed my blood for in former years, but a man of this world, attired in gay apparel, steeped in sensuality, forgetful of his high mission. An apostate! I could have struck him to the earth with my dagger, but I felt in some degree yet bound to him by my oath till I had positively proved that he was the backslider he seemed, so I disguised my feelings. Then came that most accursed crime, the massacre of Amānpur. From that moment I swore to be avenged of the traitor who had once been one of us.

“But my master’s daughter was in his hands. Her I determined to save, so I still dissembled when often my fingers itched to strike him to the earth, for power had intoxicated the man, and he did not attempt to disguise the fact that he cared not for our pure form of the only true religion, and ambition, to be gratified by any means, had filled his soul. But the

designs he had formed regarding my master's daughter determined me to thwart him in every way, and I succeeded. Then Abdul came, and from him I learnt that there was yet another prisoner, but I little knew it was my own child. That she was your adopted daughter was enough for me. I worked to save them both, and Allah gave me success. Then the British conquered, and the Nawab fled, and may Allah reward him according to his deserts, and forgive me for having been so long imposed on by him. Yet there are others as guilty as he is, but it is not for me to mention the name of the chief whilst under this roof."

"If you mean my misguided nephew, you may say on," replied Sheikh Rehmatullah, "I have disowned him, he is rich and powerful, and in favour with the rulers of the land, but to me he is dead, I had almost said accursed. But Allah is judge of all!"

The old physician's face wore an expression of unusual excitement, and his benign features glowed with anger as he repudiated his relation.

The Haji looked at him attentively for a moment, and then curtly responded,—

“The innocent blood he has shed will not sink into the earth beyond the sight of Allah. His fate will come soon.”

“May God be gracious unto him, and forgive him,” sighed the Hakim.

The Haji said nothing; his eyes flashed fire, and a dangerous expression passed over his face, but his host noticed it not.

They talked of all that he had done to ingratiate himself with the Government at the expense of his people, even his own uncle he had not spared, for Sheikh Rehmatullah could not exonerate his nephew from blame in his late persecution, and the old physician feared that there was yet further trouble in store for the sect, as it was rumoured that still more stringent measures were to be adopted to keep them in check.

“It is ever so,” said the physician, “persecutions and tribulation are to a religious sect as blistering, scarifying, and counter-irritants are to the human body, they do not kill, but, on the contrary, strengthen. We shall in the end come out triumphant, but many must swell the ranks of the martyrs first.”

“It is not right,” growled the Haji,



that the blood of the innocent only should be shed. Allah appoints his instruments of vengeance, and the times and seasons for their application. I hold that it would be a meritorious act to avenge the deaths of our brethren unjustly accused."

"True," said the old Hakim in an absent sort of way, "but the rulers of the land are strong, and they allow us not to take the law into our own hands. That we are so strictly ruled in regard to other Moslems and the unbelievers around us, is, I cannot help thinking, beneficial on the whole, for in former years religious dissensions were productive of unbounded misery, and the angry passions of men were constantly exercised instead of being kept down, but there are many who consider that this land is *Dar-ul-harb* or that is to say, *Dar-ul-Islam*, in the power of the infidel, and that therefore if we cannot regain it, we should leave it, for the true Moslem should not be a *Zimmi* (or payer of tribute) to an infidel power. That, however, is all theoretical, how can whole nations migrate?"

"No, that may not be possible," said the Haji, "but we should do all in our power,

short of treachery and evil doing, to bring all people to the true faith. Now, one great point which I see in favour of the English is not only their abstaining from interference with our religious institutions, but their absolute indifference to our teaching and preaching, and converting as many as we like. In the old days if a Mussulman was perverted from his faith, we visited not only him, but his perverter with severe punishment, even unto death, but if you convert an Englishman no notice is taken, to my thinking it is a blot on a religion to be so lukewarm, but it is all the better for us, so we need not be hypocritical. I have learnt many things concerning these English since I came down from the north, and there has been a great change in my mind concerning them."

"I know little of them personally," the Hakim remarked, "my lot has chiefly been cast with my own people, but I have heard many good and likewise many bad reports of the 'Sahibs,' and in all that one hears it is always well to accept what reports are good, and to lay by for proof, assertions that are otherwise, for evil is commonly enlarged upon by men in conversation.

---

There be many that prefer to slander rather than to praise."

The feelings of the Haji were now more in accordance with those of the benevolent Hakim than they would have been a year before. The fire of fanaticism had not entirely burnt out within him, it lays mouldering in its ashes, but the fuel with which he had expected to feed it had failed, there was no cause for complaint against the Feringhi he had heard cursed in unmeasured terms, he must look further a-field for the true foes of his sect, ay! even amongst the ranks of the so-called Faithful. He exonerated, with his clear power of reasoning, the English who took part in the persecution of the Wahabis—they were foreigners, they understood not the true state of affairs. They were tolerant to Moslems generally, and in their antagonism to the Wahabis they were actuated by political and not religious motives. In this they were misled, but woe to those calling themselves followers of the Prophet, who were the misleaders! The spark in the ashes burst then into a fierce flame as he thought of them! *They* were the enemies of God and his people, and not the British. And one!

he was the arch-fiend. At the thought of him the flame leapt up from the heart till it gleamed through the eyes. Ah! but there were other scores beside religious ones to settle with him!

Thus three days passed in the old physician's house—days which would have been pleasant indeed with kindly hosts and congenial social intercourse, but the Haji was feverish and excited, and with fasting and prayer increased his moroseness, till on the whole Amina Bibi began to lose patience a little, whilst the Hakīm, who knew that his guest was troubled in mind, and under a vow, made allowances for him.

At last the Haji wrote a note, and gave it to a man who used to do odd jobs about the Hakīm's house, to take to the Munshi Karīm-ullah.

It simply stated that he had come back for a short season, and that he had matters of importance to them both to discuss, therefore he wished he would meet him at ten o'clock that night on the road by Shere Shah's tomb, where they might converse unheard by others.

We have seen that the note was delivered and that the Deputy agreed to go.

What passed at that interview is not known to mortal man, for the parties concerned went to their graves silent on the subject, but afterwards, when the matter was inquired into, the sentry at the police station some little distance off, deposed to having heard a pistol shot at about eleven o'clock.

Next morning a terrified herdsman rushed in and reported that dogs were eating the body of a man, lying on the road side. They went forth from the station to see who it was, and to their astonishment and dismay they recognized the Deputy Magistrate. The dogs slunk away from their ghastly feast as the constables approached, and there lay the mangled remains of Karim-ullah with a long Afghan knife driven to the hilt through his heart!

The policemen looked at each other in dismay. Who could have done such a thing?

Then arose the question, but who fired the shot?

The Munshi's right arm was doubled under him, so they rolled him gently over; in his hand was a revolver, and one chamber was discharged. As they talked among

themselves, and broached all sorts of wild conjectures, a tall gaunt figure rose from behind a low mud wall at some little distance, and steadying himself by resting on it, looked at them without speaking.

His clothes were stained with blood, he had tied his waist-cloth tightly round his chest, but coming through it and down the front of his *chuphan*, dark stains told of excessive bleeding.

The men first looked at him as though he were an apparition, but recovering themselves they rushed towards him in a body.

The Haji drew himself up as they approached, and laying his right hand on his breast, said,—

“I did it, I am the man you seek !”

The voice was weak and sepulchral, and the strong man having made his confession, sunk in a senseless heap on the ground.

Assistance was sent for, and ere the east broadened into the bright crimson and gold of sunrise, the news had travelled far and wide, that the Munshi Karim-ullah Sahib, Deputy Magistrate, had been found murdered on the high road, and as the population streamed out of the town to-

wards the place, they met two litters borne by men, the one containing the mangled remains of the Deputy, the other, the senseless though living body of his antagonist.

“Brother!” exclaimed the Darogah energetically, catching a friend by the arm, “thou wast with me in the court when that wandering preacher was condemned to be hung; dost thou remember his prophecy? See, Karim-ullah is dead, and the dogs have gnawed his bones!”

## CHAPTER XII.

THE Haji was astonished at the care the doctor in charge of the jail took of him. He could not understand it; he knew he had committed a crime, the punishment of which was death, therefore, why all this tender care? If he had been wounded in the service of Government, he could not have had more attention, and after all what was it for? to prepare him for hanging; even as the Meriahs pamper the victims they prepare for their human sacrifices.

He had no wish to live, in fact, he longed to die, so that he might escape the ignominy of a public execution, and therefore he took the surgeon's ministrations in no good part, but the case was an interesting one, and might do for an article in the *Lancet*, and therefore the doctor devoted extra time and trouble to the wounded man. The ball had penetrated



the chest, and had lodged so near the heart, that extraction would have been attended with the greatest danger. The surgeon therefore, resolved to leave the bullet in, and trust to its getting enclosed in a cyst, but still that was running it so fine that he calculated that any extraordinary emotion or violent exercise, might from the presence of a foreign body so near the heart cause instant death. This, however, he did not tell to his patient, who, for his part would have been pleased to hear it, for he took the doctor's care in anything but a grateful spirit. He wished to die, but was bound by the strict tenets of his faith to avoid anything approaching to suicide, otherwise the dressings and bandages would have been torn off, in the hope of bleeding to death. But he prayed daily that he might be released from his sufferings. Remorse for his crime he had absolutely none, it was not a crime in his estimation, only a service done to Allah, deserving of reward. He was the chosen instrument of His will, in punishing the atrocious misdeeds of one who was an apostate, an oppressor and a vile sensualist, and then the Haji grew the more

excited, as he thought of the insult offered to his daughter, and the sense of satisfaction deepened that he had avenged that injury, and removed a danger from her path.

The English were good people, they had been good to him and his, and he felt no enmity towards them for the part they were taking against him; they acted according to their peculiar laws, which allow not of a just standard of retaliation, and in carrying out his plans he had taken into consideration the risk he ran in breaking those laws, and therefore he was prepared for the worst. This new feature, however, upset his calculations; why all this tender surgical care for a man who was to be hung? Did they intend to spare his life in perpetual imprisonment? Astagfurullah! such an idea was anathema to him. He longed for death, he had worked for death, the reward of his undertaking was to be death, why thus thwart him?

The Haji began to hate the sight of the doctor.

And in spite of himself he began to get better.

The prisoner had yet another friend un-

known to himself in the place, for the magistrate who was to try him was Mr. Lufton's brother, and he knew the valuable services the Haji had rendered to his niece.

The current of popular feeling also set towards the Haji, amongst the natives it was supposed that he had some good reason for his act, some injury to avenge.

Those of his own sect who had been persecuted by the late deputy magistrate regarded him as a martyr, the chosen instrument of Allah to avenge them on their enemy.

In the preliminary inquiry the doctor had given evidence to the effect that the first act of offence must have come from the Munshi, for he could not with such a deadly weapon as a broad-bladed Afghan knife driven through his heart have drawn the revolver and used it with effect. Moreover, if used at such close quarters, there would have been not only the bullet wound, but also some scorching of the flesh, or clothing. He was of opinion that the shot was fired first, and that the Haji, feeling himself mortally wounded, rushed in and stabbed his opponent to the heart.

Death must have been instantaneous, of that he was sure.

All this told in favour of the Haji, and the case was only postponed to allow of his being sufficiently recovered to appear in court.


At first there was considerable sympathy shown amongst the Europeans for the Munshi, but this was soon changed. Mr. Lufton, the magistrate, received a letter from his brother at Amānpur, informing him of Karim-ullah's duplicity, and warning him not to put any trust in the man; then, on taking over the effects in his bungalow, some very suspicious documents came to hand, and finally, as is always the case in India, when the once formidable deputy was out of the way, there were not wanting many who hastened to blacken his character.

The only one who sincerely sorrowed for him was the old Mahafiz Duftu, his father; the glory of his house had now departed, and he gave way to the greatest despondency, broken occasionally by fits of violent imprecation on the head of his son's murderer; he appeared in court dishevelled and haggard, and implored that vengeance

might be dealt on the assassin, swift and unhesitating vengeance. His friends regarded him as one who had been bereft of his senses by the great calamity ; much as they had disliked his son and despised the little hunchback, they felt pity for him in his wretchedness, and treated him with more gentleness than they had ever done before.

There is much sympathetic feeling amongst the natives of India, more especially in the lower classes. Wealth in all nations is a great deadener of natural emotion, the rich are rarely so prone to outbursts of sentiment as the poor. Perhaps the feelings of the latter are more spasmodic and transient, having less discretion to restrain them, but they are for the time genuine, though often misplaced, and so in this case there was much popular sympathy for Sheikh Golam Nabi, although he had hitherto been looked upon as a jackal to his tiger son, to use the Darogah's metaphor.

There are strange contradictions in the character of natives. They are apathetic towards an object who is suffering, but they are sympathetic with that object when the



suffering is removed, and will listen with interest to the minutest details of each phase of the trial. Like the Levite and the Pharisee, they will pass on either side of the dying man, not because they are not willing to give help, but that they do not know how to set about it, and they look upon the trial as an inevitable fate which has to be borne, and which it would be impious to interfere with; but no old gossips over a dish of tea could discuss with more eagerness the most trivial circumstances of a case than they do with the convalescent.

There was no sympathy shown towards the Haji on account of his wound, that was a matter that concerned only himself, not them, but for the surroundings of his position, culminating in his probable execution, there was much expression of feeling.

It may have been partly owing to this oriental apathy regarding bodily torture, that Fazilla received so calmly the news of her father's situation.

Grace was astonished, and somewhat shocked at her composure, but she made excuses for her, for after all the Haji was a stranger to his daughter, the love that

ought to have been his had been transferred to others. Still the idea of the brave old man to whom they all owed so much, lying in a prison hospital, grievously wounded, was one that haunted her by day, and brought restless dreams at night.

But with Fazilla it was the will of Allah. She was sorry, but she neither ate the less nor slept the worse, though she shed a few tears at first and prayed for him daily as a dutiful daughter should. It is not to be denied that after the first shock of the news was over, there was a sense of relief at being freed from the dread of him, which possessed her.

The man was so imperative, so stern in his notions of right and wrong, that armed with the powerful authority of the oriental parent over his child, she dreaded the result of the discovery that she had deserted the faith of her fathers, and dared to have an opinion of her own on religious matters.

Let us not think hardly of poor Fazilla in this matter.

Suppose after a lapse of sixteen years, the whole of a brief life, there suddenly appeared a father of whose existence we

were not aware, who claimed at once from us love and obedience; nay more, the wrenching away of old ties and the substitution of new ones. A father whose character was totally different from either what we imagined or from what we had been accustomed to.

How should we feel towards him? And if after a brief intercourse, we were relieved of his authority, should we regard it as a cause for regret, although we might have admired him for many sterling qualities which we had discovered in our short intercourse?

We fear not.

Human nature is selfish, it will sympathize deeply with misfortune, if that misfortune has no adverse bearing on itself, but with a misfortune that relieves from anxiety, the sympathy is reduced to a minimum.

It is a qualified sympathy; we are sorry, yet our sorrow is tempered with joy. Perhaps this is putting it too strongly; let us use the conventional phrase, our sorrow is tempered by a sense of relief.

Be this as it may, Fazilla's sorrow was tempered with a sense of relief. She



scarcely realized the Haji's danger, and she never gave his punishment a thought. It had been hidden from her by her friends, that if the crime of murder was proved against him, he would have to expiate it on the scaffold. That she did not know, her only sorrow was for his wound and the trouble it occasioned him, and for the thought that he would die.

But she could not help feeling that she ought to grieve more for the misfortunes of a parent, she knew she had been more afflicted when she heard of Abdul's first wound, and was in a fever of excitement till the next letter came telling of his recovery, but then Abdul was all the world to her, if he died she could not survive him, of that she felt sure. Quiet and undemonstrative as she was, she had powerful springs of emotion hidden away in her heart, ready to burst forth into a fatal torrent of despair if the bounds of her happiness were broken. Impetuosity is inherent in an oriental, love and hate are strong and unrestrained, the less civilized the people, the stronger the feeling. The European girl of the nineteenth century either has higher impulses to sustain her, or, as is often the case, she grieves awhile

after a fashion and consoles herself with another. The sorrows of the eastern maiden frequently find solace in the cool depths of a well or in the nepenthe of a fatal opiate. It was true grief that often carried the young widow cheerfully to the burning pyre in days not so very long ago, and now suicide is more common amongst the women than the men, especially as regards Mahomedans.

Both Mr. Lufton and Sir Paul Stanford were strenuous in their exertions on behalf of the Haji, but, as the former's brother wrote, there was little chance of his being convicted for murder if he pleaded self-defence, the medical evidence being so strong in his favour. The old fellow, however, was obstinate and persistently refused to discuss the question, and seemed rather to look forward to being hung.

"Well," said Mr. Lufton as he read the letter at the breakfast-table, "it would be better for him to be hung."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Grace.

"Yes, my dear, it would be far better; any other punishment, imprisonment for life, or for a time even, would be infinitely worse than death to him, death is the stake he had played for, that is, such a death

as he considers will entitle him to the reward of a *shahid* or martyr, and now of course he will not appreciate any attempt to wrest it from him."

"What an extraordinary man," replied the girl, "why could he not be like other people, he was such a good old fellow in all things but this insane religious fervour."

"I have no doubt his religious fervour made him the good man he was; but for a strong consciousness of right and wrong, according to his own notion, he might have been led astray like others, and we should not have had his valuable aid in our trouble."

"Are you not going to do anything for him, papa?"

"My dear, he would thank me best for leaving him alone. I certainly shall not try to save him, for if his life be spared under the conditions I have stated, his whole nature will be changed and his worst qualities will come uppermost, there will be more murder done and, some innocent life may be sacrificed, nay, knowing what I do of the man, I would rather help him to his fate than save him from it, and I know I should thereby earn his gratitude."

### CHAPTER XIII.

At last the day was fixed for the trial.

The judge's court was thronged within and without, and a strong guard of military police was present to keep order.

The case had excited so much interest that, besides the witnesses summoned from Sasseram, a number of the residents of that town had come up to the Sudder station to hear the decision. The sympathy for the prisoner had grown stronger during his protracted illness, and amongst the Wahabis especially he was looked upon already as a martyr. The evil deeds of the Munshi, now that the dread of him was removed, formed the theme of daily gossip, and the old poisoner alluded to in a former chapter was so openly accused by many of having assisted him in his designs, that at last she was arrested by the police, and report had it that her evidence during the


trial would throw some light on the mystery.

The old Haji resolutely refused all offers of assistance in his defence.

Why should they make a talk about it? the matter was clear enough, and very few words were needed.

But as the case opened, a Vakil voluntarily offered himself for the defence, and the court allowed it, though the prisoner made a gesture of dissent.

The aspect of the Haji told greatly in his favour. Those of the spectators who had expected to see a ferocious fanatic, with murderous frenzy depicted in every line of his face, with dishevelled hair, and rolling eyes, like those who had occasionally been brought to trial during the past year, were surprised to find a tall, soldierly-looking man—erect as a palm-tree in spite of his grievous illness, with a dignified air, and calm, imperturbable countenance, suggestive of great determination, but devoid of ferocity. Occasionally a look of impatience would come over his face as his counsel tried to make out a good case for him; but otherwise he showed no more emotion than if he were but a mere looker-on.



The first witness called was the old Hakīm, who deposed to the Haji having stayed with him. He admitted that the Haji was not disposed to be friendly toward his nephew; it was believed in the family that the Munshi had attempted to do a grievous wrong to the prisoner's daughter.

After a few questions regarding the Haji's antecedents, the old physician was allowed to stand down, and the servant who took the letter from the Haji to the Munshi was called.

He had taken a letter, and brought back a verbal message. That was all he knew.

What was the verbal message?

That the Munshi would do what the Haji Sahib asked.

The next witness was the herdsman, who deposed to finding the Deputy Magistrate's body on the road, with the dogs eating it.

The policemen who went out were next examined; and they described the position of the body, and surrender of the prisoner, and produced the knife and revolver, which were identified by the Hakīm, and

the Deputy's servants, as having belonged to the respective persons.

The civil surgeon then deposed to taking the knife out of the body. It was an Afghan knife; about fifteen inches long, two and a half inches broad at the hilt, and tapering gradually to a sharp point; the knife produced in court was the one he took out; and a shudder ran through the audience as he held up the blood-stained weapon. Death must have been instantaneous; the deceased could not have fired a shot with effect after receiving such a stab. The surgeon had examined the wound and had attended the prisoner since. The wound was produced by a pistol bullet fired at close quarters; it had entered a little to the right of the left breast, and had lodged so near the heart, escaping that organ by an hair's breadth, as to render extraction an operation attended with the greatest risk, he had therefore preferred to leave the bullet in; and it was now in the prisoner's body. He was of opinion that the prisoner had been first fired at, and had then used his knife with deadly effect; the reverse of this proceeding was impossible. No man with a knife of the kind produced

in court, driven through his heart, would be able to level and discharge a pistol; so far, he could give testimony in the prisoner's favour, that he was not the first to deal the blow. Yes, it was possible that the prisoner might have made the first demonstration by drawing his knife, and then the deceased might have been quicker in discharging the pistol.

The Government prosecutor then wound up with a summary of the evidence.

There was a proved enmity between the two men; or rather, his proper expression would be, between the prisoner and the deceased, for it was not proved that the Munshi had any grudge against the prisoner, whereas the prisoner had become aware of the fact that the girl abducted by Karim-ullah was his own daughter, and his Afghan blood would not stand such an injury without revenge, for this purpose he evidently took leave from his master, and came down to Sasseram to pick a quarrel with his enemy. He took the initiative and invited the deceased to meet him. Karim-ullah went, but, as was not uncommon in the present disturbed time, he went armed with a revolver; what passed between these



two men in the silence and gloom of night no one save the prisoner knows ; but next morning the Deputy was found murdered, and, according to his own confession, by the prisoner, Haji Sher Ali.

The Vakil for the defence now rose, and, premising that it was by no means conclusively proved that the animus attributed to the prisoner existed ; said he would call witnesses who would show that it was the deceased who had an interest in getting rid of the prisoner, and who, in all probability, was the first to plan and carry out the murderous attack. He then recalled the Hakīm, and cross-examined him. It was the Deputy who had got the appointment for the prisoner in Mr. Lufton's house ; the Haji was not known to the Deputy, but was introduced to him by a powerful friend ; who was this friend ? The Hakīm could not say ; but the Vakil was prepared to state from documentary evidence found in the deceased's house, that this friend was one Nawab Syed Hyder Ali, a resident at that time at the court of the Emperor of Delhi. Had the Haji at any time during his stay in the Hakīm's house given any hint or sign of his animosity

sity towards the deceased? No, not beyond his reprobation of the Munshi's conduct towards his uncle's co-religionists. The Vakil next read portions found in the Deputy's desk of letters, which had passed between him and Syed Hyder Ali, in which the prisoner was mentioned. The prisoner therefore knew of the friendship between the two men, and as Syed Hyder Ali was a notorious rebel, it was not pleasant to the deceased to know that his secret was in the possession of the prisoner; therefore, that was a motive for his wishing to get rid of him. That he did wish, and try, to get rid of him, the Vakil was prepared to prove; let Sakina Dai be called.

The old poisoner came cringing into court, the picture of abject terror.

Did she or did she not receive instructions from Munshi Karim-ullah to poison the prisoner? Yes, she did; it was to be done next morning by means of a poisoned cocoa-nut, and she was to get five hundred rupees for it; but she was sorry afterwards for her wickedness and did not do it, and had now told the whole truth to the Sirkar; she did not know why it was to be done, but

the Munshi Sahib told her the prisoner was a dangerous man, an enemy to the state, and to their holy religion, and that his destruction would be a meritorious act. It was now proved that the deceased had an object in, and intention of, getting rid of the prisoner, and the probabilities were, that he went out armed, determined to take his life. The medical evidence went far to prove that the deceased was the aggressor, and therefore he contended that the prisoner acted in self-defence in killing his assailant; that was the view he held, and he trusted that the Judge and assessors would agree with him. So closed the case for the defence.

At this stage of the proceedings public opinion was decidedly in favour of the Haji; the Judge, the assessors, and the audience were all prepared for a favourable verdict, when, before summing up, the prisoner was asked whether he had anything to say for himself.

Up to this moment the Haji had kept strict silence; he had listened with grave attention to the proceedings, but had not by word or gesture attempted to interrupt, but now, on being asked what he had to

say for himself, he drew himself up to his full height and replied,—

“My lord, there has been much said about this affair, but my words are the words of truth. I did kill that man, I intended to kill him; Allah knows my motives, and I was but an instrument in His hands. I know my life is forfeited by your laws—take it. Your laws are great and good, but the commands of the Almighty are greater. I have said my say; I killed Munshi Karīm-ullah, and I came expressly to Sasseram to kill him.”

The effect of this speech in court may be imagined; the blank amazement of all; the indignant expression of the Vakil who had made out so good a case, and the pitying gravity of the Judge, as, with a shrug of his shoulders, he addressed the assessors to the effect that it was useless to balance the evidence now, after the self-accusation of the prisoner, and that they had no alternative but to bring him in guilty. This they did, and sentence of death was pronounced in due form.

The only one who left that court-room with a light heart was the gaunt old man, who, with a firm and soldierly step, strode out to meet his doom.

## CHAPTER XIV.

SENTENCE of death had been passed and the hours sped all too slowly for the prisoner in his solitary cell; every morning his first question was, "Has the order come?"

He longed to be free,—free to roam in the gardens of paradise, where all is gratification to the senses, and pain, sorrow, and disappointment enter not.

No remorse, no compunction agitated his bosom for the crime he had committed. He was but the instrument of Allah, his victim was doomed to writhe in that purgatorial Jehannum of the Moslems, which is made seventy times hotter for the peccant Mahomedan than for the infidel; yea, he would be ultimately cast into Hawia, the seventh or bottomless hell, whilst his murderer would be rewarded with the crown of the martyr for his sufferings and constancy.

The lingering moments were spent in the reading of the Quran, which was all the indulgence the Haji asked for.

But he got impatient at the delay, which he could not understand. They had found him guilty and they had condemned him to death, then why did they not carry out the sentence at once ?

He became moody and irritable, not wishing to see any one, unless it were the messenger bearing the tidings he would fain hear.

There was, however, much misplaced sympathy for him outside the jail walls, especially amongst the Europeans, and the matter had gone up to the Lieutenant-Governor for his decision, he having the right to pardon. This caused the delay.

One day a visitor was admitted to the Haji's cell, and he looked up somewhat angrily from his Quran, but instantly sprang to his feet and stretched out his hands to his old master.

"Has the order come ? have you brought it ?" was his eager question.

"Nay, my friend," replied Mr. Lufton, "you must have patience, the greater the suffering here the greater the reward hereafter."

"True, true," moodily answered the old man, relapsing into morose apathy. "May Allah send it soon," he continued with a sigh, "for this delay is a great tyranny."

Why do they delay, do you know anything about it?"

"I believe the matter has gone up to the Lieutenant-Governor. There are many who wish your life to be spared."

"But he will not listen to them! You have not asked him to do this?" eagerly demanded the Haji, clutching Mr. Lufton by the arm.

"No, I have not, for I do not think you wish it; I would not sign the petition, for why should I thwart your hopes?"

"You are my true friend," replied the old man warmly. "You understand me; would that all your people were like you; and that you were all of the faith. I would die still happier if I knew you were of the chosen, and great is the reward of him who leadeth the unbeliever into the straight path."

"We are both men of the Book," answered Mr. Lufton. "We believe in the same God, have the same prophets, excepting that we choose Hazrut Isa, the spirit of God, as you yourselves call him, in preference to your Hazrut Mahomed, the messenger of God, and the question between us will be decided at the last day."

"It will, it will, and may Allah who is all-merciful take your good works into

consideration, and those of your daughter, and reward you according to his will; it is not for me to judge you whilst yet Is-rail the Angel of Death is standing beside me. I read in those sacred pages that neither Christian nor Jew shall suffer eternal punishment if he believe in Allah and the last day, and do good works. Perhaps you may not attain to the blissful Paradise of the true believer, yet shall you be saved" (and here a savage gleam crossed his face) "from the torments of the damned that await the apostate Moslim."

Mr. Lufton hastened to change the conversation, feeling that any allusion to the late Deputy would over-excite the prisoner.

They spoke of Fazilla and her plans for the future. The Haji quite approved of the union with Abdul Rahim, and he heard with pride and satisfaction how the young man had been distinguishing himself, and the rank he had already attained. There is no distinction, he proudly observed, like that won by the sword, the brave soldier is always noble. The man who carves out lies with his pen, is as a dog to a lion compared with the warrior who cannot even write his name.

"You would have liked a soldier's death,



it is a pity you could not have one," remarked Mr. Lufton.

"All deaths are alike to good men," replied the Haji, "death in whatever form it comes is to them the key of the gate of Paradise. What matter if it be of iron, or copper, or silver, or gold, it unlocks the door all the same. Yet I do not say that I should not have preferred the golden key of death on the field of battle. I should even have preferred to fall under the bullet of that accursed creature, who, forsaking the true religion, had filled his soul with the worship of Satan, and practice of every vice; would that I had died of that wound, it was not good, it was not kind of your doctor to prolong the life that was not worth saving, it would have been much better to let me die."

"It was the will of God that he should have been able to save you," said Mr. Lufton, "had it been ordained that you should die, all the doctor's skill would have been of no avail; you must not grumble at the will of the Almighty."

"True! Protector of the poor, true; I cannot avoid my fate but must bow to the will of Allah. The doctor could not have saved me had he not been permitted, for

it is written, 'Ye have no protectors save God; neither can ye be assisted against Him.'"

This closed the conversation, and Mr. Lufton then left, promising to return so soon as he heard news of the carrying out of the sentence.

He was staying with his brother the magistrate, as were Grace and her husband, who were on their way to England.

Fazilla had come down with them, but had been left at Sasseram with the old Hakīm and his family, who rejoiced over her as one who had been dead and was alive again. She had wept bitterly at parting from Grace, but was consoled at the thought that her English friend would write to her frequently, and she was now quite enough skilled with her pen to write in reply.

Abdul Rahīm's grounding and Grace's finishing, added to her natural aptitude for learning, had made Fazilla quite an accomplished girl.

Grace's last present was a little Testament bound in ivory, and old Amina Bibi somewhat doubtfully shook her head, but said nothing more, when she surprised Fazilla one morning reading her usual chapter, and on asking what the book was,

received for reply that it was the *Anjil* or Gospel. She was rather afraid of Fazilla's learning, and her actually corresponding with an English lady in her own language was a thing hitherto unheard of in the Zenana.

The old lady, however, took much interest in all the treasures Fazilla had brought: a little writing-desk with paper, pens, and ink, books, some of them with pretty pictures; combs and brushes, and a sponge, which last excited much curiosity. Fazilla had become quite an English lady, but as the old woman folded her to her bosom she perceived that she was the same sweet unassuming, loving child as before. Not a bit spoiled by all her presents and accomplishments, nor by the fact that she was now an heiress, with broad acres to call her own.

She fell into the old ways, and insisted on making the cakes as before, and moved about the house as if she had never been away.

The blessings of the old people followed her as she flitted about the house, and even old Amirun's crab-apple face brightened into a smile as she came near.

Now to return to the Luftons. The principle topic of conversation at dinner that evening was the Haji. The decision

of the Lieutenant-Governor had come that afternoon, the sentence of death was commuted to penal servitude for ten years. The elder Mr. Lufton was sorry to hear it. The popular sympathy for the man was a mistake; he sympathized with him more than any one, and he felt that death was the best thing for him. The magistrate asked his brother whether he would break the news to the prisoner, it would be joyful news to most, but to the old fanatic, it was worse than the most lingering death.

“I would rather not,” replied the elder Mr. Lufton, “but perhaps I have more influence with the old man than any other person, so I will do it.”

“Could not I break it to him, papa,” said Grace, “and try and persuade him to live for the sake of his daughter.”

“No, my dear girl, your persuasions would be thrown away, and I would rather you avoided what will, I am sure, be a very painful scene.”

So the matter ended that night.

Next morning Mr. Lufton, accompanied by his brother and the doctor, went to the condemned man's cell. He was there, reciting as usual from the Quran, and Mr.

Lufton, who was acquainted with Arabic, was struck with the sonorous roll of the old man's deep voice as he read, "The provision of this life is but small, but the future shall be better for him who feareth God."

As they entered, the Haji rose and inquired as usual, "Has the order come?"

"It has come," replied Mr. Lufton; "doth not your own book say, 'Death cometh to every one, even though he live in a lofty tower'? but again it is also written, 'No soul can die unless by the permission of God,' therefore, my friend, prepare thyself to bow to the will of the Almighty, and not seek for death sooner than He is pleased to grant it to thee."

"Then the order has not come," replied the Haji, with a wild despairing look and a wail in his voice, which struck strangely on his old master's ears.

"No, that order has not come, the Lieutenant-Governor, from a feeling of mercy and pity towards you, has commuted your sentence from death to ten years' imprisonment."

The old man rose to his full height and said not a word; he stood with his head bent down, as though his eyes were rivetted

on the Quran which lay open on a little stool at his feet, his hands were clasped before him, but there was convulsive energy depicted in the knotty veins that stood out on them and in the clutch of the sinewy fingers; there were tears too rolling down the furrowed cheeks. An affecting moment passed in dead silence, none liked to speak; at last the Haji threw up his hands towards heaven, and casting up his eyes, broke forth passionately,—

“Ya, Allah! all merciful! all powerful! whom I have served with unswerving fidelity all these years, whose justice is unquestionable, whose mercy is illimitable, who would not wrong any one, even the weight of an ant, what have I done that Thou shouldst refuse to take me? oh tell me wherein I have sinned!”

“This excitement will be fatal to him,” whispered the doctor. “Mr. Lufton, speak to him and divert his mind.”

But before any one could say aught, there was a wild shout,—

“Allah ho Akbar! La-il-la-ha, Il-lal-la-ho!” (God is great, there is no god but God), and the prisoner fell prone on the earth.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders as he stooped to raise him.

"I knew how it would be," he said, "the excitement has killed him, he is as dead as a door-nail."

"It is well as it is," replied Mr. Lufton.

"Poor old Ursa Major," said Grace that night with tears in her eyes, "his was a sad life and a tragic end, but perhaps it was the best for him. Paul, dearest, cannot we put a monument over him!"

"Yes, my pet, I will ask your father about it."

Mr. Lufton said it must be very plain, for the Wahabis object to ornate tombs, so they must put a plain marble of the orthodox shape, with his name and a deep-cut Arabic inscription in gold letters from the Quran; on one side the sentence from the seventy-third chapter: "God is ready to forgive, and merciful," and on the other a quotation from the ninety-ninth, "And whosoever shall have wrought good of the weight of an ant shall behold the same."

And yet, some of our readers may exclaim, this man was a murderer!

It may be so, but the judgment scales are held in other hands than such as ours, else who could hope to escape?

## CHAPTER XV.

A few weeks after the occurrences related in the last chapter, Paul and Grace were steaming down the Hooghly in a P. and O. steamer. Their only regret in seeing the shores of India fade away from sight was the leaving of Mr. Lufton, who was not as yet prepared to resign the service, but who promised to follow them in three years, if his life were spared. There were many painful memories, especially to Grace, connected with the country, and they hoped to forget a good deal of the past in their pleasant English home. Life, which had been so chequered of late, now seemed to broaden before them in pleasant sunny paths, and Grace felt that there were yet other and newer ties shadowed in the future to make life sweeter, though more responsible.

Existence, one can hardly call it life, on



board ship has been so often and so vividly described by other writers, that we need hardly trouble our readers with more than a sketch of what it was on this occasion.

There was the usual amount of eating and drinking, which seems to fill four-fifths of time afloat, there was also the usual amount of grumbling at the eatables and drinkables, which is the peculiar prerogative of the independent Briton. There did seem to be some foundation for the assertion that the cooks would fiendishly devise that boiled legs of mutton smothered in greasy onion sauce, and pork with pease puddings should be placed before the most squeamish passengers on lively days, and indeed the P. and O. might take a lesson from the Messageries, in the matter of their cuisine.

Then there were the usual cliques among the passengers. The military clique and the civilian clique, and the nobodies-you-know, who had cliques amongst themselves, and all that British snobbism, which you never find on board a French steamer, except amongst the English snobs who travel thereon.

However, Paul and Grace kept free from all cliques, Sir Paul as an English baronet had an assured position, which made him and his wife free of all the coteries; and their natural dispositions, as well as the freedom from narrow-mindedness which is gained by much travelling, made them the same to all. Consequently they were favourites.

There was a little Frenchman on board, who attached himself greatly to the Stanfords, to Paul, because he was good-natured, and spoke his language well, and to Grace, because she was always sympathetic, though frequently bored.

“Monsieur Sir Paul Stanford est un grand homme, bien gentil; mais miladi Stanford—oh!!!”

The expressiveness of that “oh!!!” told far more than volumes of panegyric.

Monsieur Vallon was about to retire to his own country after a long absence, having saved a small competence, and he now revelled with delight in the prospect of spending his last days in the beautiful country in the vicinity of his native town, Bayonne.

“Ah, madam,” he would say to Grace,

“it is sweet to think of quiet repose after all these years of toil in a foreign land. If I had only known as a youth, what a mirage,—what a dead-sea fruit, this land of the gorgeous East is, I would never, never have come out to it.”

“But, Monsieur Vallon, have you not found anything to attract and please you during your stay in India?”

“Nothing, madam, nothing. For what did I come out? to shake a pagoda tree and become very rich, but what folly! the pagoda tree has no fruit and its leaves give no shade. People say to me, But you have a large salary, you live *en prince*, with a grand house and numerous domestics, you have a carriage and horses, that you would not have at home. *C'est vrai, mais après tout*, what does it come to? The things that are luxuries at home are necessaries in India; your large pay goes to satisfy the claims on you for all these grandeurs, to buy these dead-sea fruits that turn to ashes between your teeth, and you have nothing left to save, nothing at all; why! for the things that you buy for one franc in Paris, you give three in Calcutta, if not six, and, ma

foi, you have no enjoyment of life, none! What is it? it is a mockery, it is the banquet spread on the tomb, the *fête champêtre* in the cemetery!"

Monsieur Vallon had just delivered himself of this speech in a most impressive manner, when the second dinner-bell rang, and Paul came to take his wife down. As they descended the stairs to the saloon they passed a fair young lady clad in widow's weeds. She had a pretty face, but with a wan, sad expression; there were many widows on board, in fact at that time few of the passengers were out of mourning, but none had attracted Grace so much as this one, and she asked her husband so soon as they were out of hearing if he knew who she was.

"All I know of her is from the label on the back of her chair," replied Paul, "Mrs. Bigger,—not a very aristocratic name."

"Mrs. Bigger!" exclaimed Grace, "why Paul, that is the name of the civilian that little Ellen D'Arcy, Fred's old love, married."

"Then, my dear, Fred has now got a chance of an innings, for I believe that

young woman to be the *Veuve Bigger*, though the name is a misnomer for such a wee mite as she is."

"Poor thing," said Grace, looking at her with sympathy, "so she is a widow. I don't think her's was a happy life, she was made to marry that man."

"Three hundred a year dead or alive," remarked Paul, helping himself to soup.

"It was a cruel thing to do. Let us try and make her acquaintance, and then if she is nice, I will tell Fred we met her."

"And if she is not nice I suppose my wise little wife will preserve a discreet silence."

"Well, I should not like Fred to marry any one who was not nice."

To make a long story short, they did in course of time make Mrs. Bigger's acquaintance, and Grace did write a very long letter from Suez to Fred, in which the little widow figured at some length.

They left the steamer at Suez, and crossing over from Alexandria to Brindisi, travelled by easy stages to Florence.

There Paul found his studio exactly as he had left it; the last unfinished picture on the easel and everything in its place,

even the camellia-tree in its pot, looking a trifle older, but still throwing out buds.

As for Beppa, she nearly hugged Paul in her delight at seeing him safe and sound, for she had never expected him to return; had not they heard awful news of the massacres in India and the fighting with those pagans and savages? Beppa's idea of an East Indian was a being somewhat between a Cherokee and a cannibal.

Santissima Donna! when she heard those awful stories, she vowed a candle of purest wax for the altar of the Holy Madonna in the 'Nunziata, if her good Signor Paolo came back safe, and now of course she must pay it, and Signor Luigi, would he not be pleased to hear the news? and Leonardo too, and Teresa, and Pietro at the Luna. Here the old woman fairly got out of breath, and then, recollecting Grace's presence, began a fresh stream of welcome and benediction on the beautiful Signora. Signor Luigi had told her that Signor Paolo had married, and had become a great lord, very rich, so she ought to be mindful of that, and she hoped the Signor Conte would forgive her, but the old name would come uppermost to her

tongue, but he would forgive her, and the Signora Contessa, too; 'tissima Donna! what good luck to escape those savage pagans, and come back a Count with a beautiful Countess.

Paul and Grace escaped as soon as they could, the former slipping a gold coin into the old woman's hand, which would amply cover the cost of the candle, and leave a little to spare.

They had the warmest welcome from old Cardoni, and a quiet and respectful one from the old soldier, Leonardo, who though delighted to see his master again, reported all well, and made over the keys of his rooms and boxes like a sentry making over charge. The old man was keen, nevertheless, to hear all about the fighting in India.

Signor Cardoni had a pretty little villa a few miles out of Florence, on the slopes of the hills overlooking the Val d'Arno, with a fine old clump of cedars behind it, through which peeped the belfry of a quaint little old chapel. In front of the house was a terrace overlooking the beautiful valley of the Arno, the bosky wood of the Cascine and the cupolas and

campaniles of Florence, whilst beyond rose the heights of Bellosguardo and San Miniato. Below the terrace was a garden embowered with trailing vines. To this suburban retreat Signor Cardoni welcomed his old friends a few days after their return to Florence.

The day was a Festa; there was to be a procession in the village, and one of Signor Luigi's serving maids had been chosen as Queen of the Feast.

It was a lovely morning, and as they drove out of the Porta del Prato in a well-horsed barouche, with Leonardo got up in a new pair of white gloves in honour of his master's return, Paul and Grace felt a quiet joy which could hardly find expression in words. All seemed so bright and joyous. The air, the flowers, the birds, and the bright-winged butterflies, each struck a chord of the full-strung hearts that vibrated with gladness after all the perilous days they had passed through, when hope and fear and despair had chased each other so rapidly through the darksome time.

The drive seemed all too short, as they watched the tints that lay on distant hill



and wood, and criticized the costume of the peasantry, or as they quizzed some Florentine dandy in his gig, with a fast trotting pony adorned with bells, and an admirable dexterity in making pistol-like cracks with a formidable whip, or Leonardo, with his self-satisfied air and spruce get up.

Leonardo, who as we have before observed, had been valet to an ambassador, had thought it rather a come down to be factotum to an artist, but now that Signor Paolo had turned out to be a "nobleman," there was no limit to his satisfaction.

Our friends were welcomed by Signor Cardoni and his family, with the genuine warmth of the true Italian.

It was near the hour fixed for dinner, and they dined a little earlier on account of the festa. What a dinner it was!

Paul had a good appetite, and Grace had not been long enough in India to be satisfied with half a shadow of a mosquito's wing, as some of our fair country-women seemed to be after a prolonged residence in the East, but they were fain to cry "hold enough," before half the courses were served.

Signora Cardoni prided herself, and

justly too, on her cookery, and Paul, out of compliment to her, performed prodigies of gastronomic valour, but he was at last conquered, to the great merriment of his Italian friends, who declared that the Indian climate had affected him sadly. However, his hostess protested she would let him off the next two or three dishes, but he must really try some of her game pie. Now game pie was Signora Cardoni's *chef-d'œuvre*, and Paul well remembered its excellence, so he bowed acquiescence with a complimentary little speech, and when the pie was served, the host whispered to one of the attendants, and the man left the room, returning shortly with an old very cobwebby bottle. This he carefully uncorked and served its contents round, in smaller glasses than those which had been used for the very excellent country wine that accompanied the dinner.

“ Ah ! Grace ! this *is* wine ! ” exclaimed Paul, raising his glass to inhale the fragrant bouquet. “ Liquid velvet with an aroma of an Italian spring in the wild woods. Cardoni, kings would envy you this brand.”

“ Ah yes, my friend, is it good ? It is a

pity I have so little of it left, it is very old and has no name. The produce of a small unknown vineyard, but everybody likes it, and it is generous wine, very strong, though as mild and insinuating as a priest."

"It is a fit accompaniment to la Signora's gamepie, which in itself is perfection."

"Ah, Signor Paolo, if you are going to be so very complimentary I must run away, perhaps the Signora Contessa would like to see the girls dressed for the *festa*."

Grace expressed her willingness to help, so the ladies left them, whilst Paul and his host finished the old bottle at the open window, with the bees humming in the wallflowers below them, and the breeze bearing the songs of skylarks and cooing of wild doves in the cypresses.

After a long chat about old times and subsequent adventures, Signor Cardoni suggested that they should look after the ladies, or else they might be too late for the *festa*.

They went down into the garden, and on the shady side of the house they found the girl having the finishing touches put to her attire. Carmela was no doubt a beauty, and clad in snowy white, with

her veil and wreath and necklet of pearls, she looked the queen of the feast.

Grace was down on her knees pinning on a bow of white ribbon, and as she rose, the perfectly composed air with which Carmela said "Grazie tanti, Signora Contessa," struck Paul.

"How different your servants are from ours, Signor Luigi! an English girl would be either smothered in confusion or insufferably pert."

"It is our simple country life," replied the old artist. "I have been in your England, and I have noticed how the domestic is not content in her own sphere, but mocks and imitates her superiors. So she is like a monkey that mimics the actions of human beings. If she be not accustomed to higher life, she is shame-faced, and otherwise she is forward if much noticed. Here our servants keep entirely to their rank, they have no wish to move out of it; being kindly treated they are more familiar in a family than you would allow your English servants to be, but they never presume."

The last pin having been inserted, Carmela darted off to join her companions, and

the rest of the party proceeded to a shady nook, commanding the road, by which the procession was to pass.

The sight was a pretty one. All the girls of the village and neighbourhood who had any pretensions to beauty, clad in white, and carrying tapers, walked two and two, whilst priests and acolytes with bell and book and chant brought up the rear.

Signor Cardoni and his guests reached home before the procession was dissolved, and they all sat out on the terrace in the balmy evening. Paul and Grace had to submit to a rigorous cross-examination regarding their Indian adventures, in which even the old servants who gathered round them took a part. Signor Paolo was no stranger to them, and of course they were interested in his escapes.

“Ah, here comes the Queen of the Festa,” exclaimed Paul, as Carmela, all radiant with joy, approached. “Here, Leonardo, a chair for her majesty.”

“Tommaso! bring that bottle of wine and glasses,” said Signor Luigi. “We must drink to the Queen of the Feast.”

The blushing girl took the chair and modestly acknowledged the toast, after

which the conversation went on till it was time for the visitors to depart.

A few days afterward the Stanfords bade a reluctant farewell to their warm-hearted Italian friends and proceeded on their way to England. We must leave them for a while in their grand old country house, surrounded by ancestral elms, beneath whose boughs had ridden cavaliers who had bent the knee to bluff King Hal and doffed their plumed hats to the ill-fated Anne Boleyn, and return to sun-scorched India. As we shall have to bid them farewell for a time, we may say that Grace, who had tended the sick and wounded under the roar of artillery and the crash of falling masonry in that ill-fated house at Amānpur, was not one to stay her hand from the sick and needy of the parish.

As the weeks and months rolled on into years, though her home ties increased as little ones prattled round her knees, still her energy and solicitude for the poor grew stronger, and as there was not a wish of her heart that her husband would not do his utmost to gratify, almshouses, cottage hospitals, and schools bore testimony to their benevolence.

## CHAPTER XVI.

By the autumn of 1859 the great Indian rebellion was virtually over. Long before that it was patent to the most doubting that the power of the British was once more in the ascendant. The wavering chiefs had come forward boldly to the winning side, and some who had taken up arms against us, made terms and deserted their colleagues in rebellion. Signs and prophecies had proved false; although the Brahmins still adhered to the truth of that which proclaimed that the Sirkar should rule only one hundred years from the battle of Plassey,—that prediction had been verified by the abolition of the government of the East India Company; its fulfilment was accomplished when the Queen was proclaimed sovereign of Hindustan. But such ingenious sophistry, though it salved the wounded vanity of the believers in Brahminical forecasting, failed to con-

vince those who had hoped to see the Europeans expelled from the country, that they had not made a gigantic blunder, and had but rivetted the iron yoke more firmly on their necks.

Of the native army there were thousands of men cursing their fate, a fate for which they were themselves responsible, would they but own it, but which, according to the Oriental mode of reasoning, they persisted in ascribing to unavoidable predestination. Men who had forgotten how to dig, and to beg were ashamed, safe now under the amnesty granted by a strong and merciful government, skulked in their villages, bitterly regretting the days when they were well-fed and clothed, and tended in sickness, regularly paid and endowed with valuable privileges in a service which was one of honour. And now!

Those that survived of that once pampered army, what were they to do?

Better were it almost that their bones were bleaching in the summer sun, as were those of thousands of their brethren.

Where was the once proud title of *Sipahi* in which they delighted?



Look at these tall gaunt forms, all haggard and worn with privation, sneaking back to the village homes where once they had strutted about in such pride, the envy and admiration of their stalwart brethren who still followed the plough.

They were now ashamed of that in which they had taken such pride. Nay more! there was danger even in admitting that they had served in the British ranks, for were not men taken and executed daily, against whom testimony, true or false, could be brought of complicity in the murder of Europeans? Those men, once so fearless, now sat cowed and trembling, lest some enemy, at whom in former days they would have snapt their fingers with impunity, should now lay information against them, with some trumped-up story which it might be difficult to disprove. Verily! they had made their faces black!

Oude and Rajpootana were full of stalwart martial men, bending their erect forms over the crooked plough, with hearts melting within their bosoms, which in many cases carried the honourable scars of victorious conflicts. They saw a new

soldiery springing up in their place. Men of all castes,—foreigners, Sikhs, Afghans, and Goorkhas, now filled the ranks; why should they be employed any more? perhaps when all their misdeeds had been forgotten! Ah! but when would they be forgotten? Not in this generation, they feared.

There were others, however, who had not come in under the amnesty, feeling that their crimes had been too heinous to allow of pardon, and these in small bands, still roamed the country or skulked in the forests.

Beni Sing was at the head of one of these bands. He knew he would get scant mercy for the acts he had committed from time to time, culminating with the murder of an officer, who had the temerity to pursue him, single-handed, after an engagement in which the outlaw's band had been dispersed.

The action took place in broken ground adjoining dense jungle, and as the Dacoit chief fled, he was hotly pursued by the English leader of the Government troops, who in the race outstripped his men. Beni Sing's length of leg and constant practice

was in his favour, but his opponent was a noted Rugby runner, and for a time seemed to gain on the Indian. Beni Sing was somewhat heavily handicapped, as his sword and matchlock were weighty disadvantages; but after a while he put on a spurt with all his strength, and perceptibly widened the distance between himself and his pursuer, then suddenly wheeling round behind a bush, he dropped on his knees, and levelling the matchlock, fired.

The Englishman fell, riddled with four bullets, and the Dacoit, without waiting to see the result of his shot, sprang to his feet and plunged into the thicket.

After this tragedy, he became if possible more dreaded than before.

He defied all attempts on the part of the authorities to capture him.

He would appear most unexpectedly in a distant part of the country, sack a village, torturing the wealthier residents, or carrying off some for ransom, and ere another sun had set, he would be miles away.

A detachment of Barton's horse had been encamped for some days in the neighbourhood of a village where the Dacoits had made an attack, but were

successfully repulsed by the villagers, aided by a small guard of Military Police, which opportunely arrived on the very day before the assault was made. But for this timely succour Tokmanpur would in all probability have been a heap of smoking ruins; as it was, the robbers were beaten off with a loss of several men and one prisoner.

The village now reposed for a time in security, and the hearts of its occupants were reassured.

Under the grove of mango-trees adjoining a fine old tank, were picketed two long lines of horses, whose riders were scattered about; some seeing to their chargers being rubbed down, others cleaning their accoutrements, some quietly smoking, others playing *pachici* (a game like chess), and a few lazily dozing.

In one corner of the grove a number of camels were ruminating over their allowance of forage. In another the villagers had established a sort of market, in which the troopers and camp-followers were chaffering for rice and flour, poultry and vegetables.

Apart from the small tents of the soldiery

was one a little larger and of a different shape; this was the commanding officer's. In front of it three men stood in earnest conversation.

The three were Fred Scamperby, Abdul Rahim, now Ressaldar of his troop, and Jorawur Shikari.

Fred had written to his uncle to send him Jorawur, when he had been deputed to watch Beni Sing's movements, and the Shikari, though daily more enraptured with his new nose, was as keen as ever to avenge the loss of his old one on the person of his former chief.

He was eagerly talking in subdued tones, whilst the Englishman and Abdul Rakim gravely listened.

The latter had grown a very handsome man; tall and stalwart, with an erect and soldierly bearing, a fine open face with clear hazel eyes and a short curly beard, he looked the picture of a *beau sabreur*. In the whole Indian army at that time, you would hardly have found more typical specimens of the dashing irregular horsemen, than in the two men, English and native, before us.

"My lord," said Jorawur, "trust the

prisoner to me, I will be answerable for him. He too has suffered wrongs at the hands of Beni Sing; it is true he has saved his nose," he added with a savage grin; "but he carries the marks of stripes on his back, and Beni Sing had taken his sister to wife, and afterwards deserted her—this I know,—so he will be faithful. His life will be spared and he will get a reward; he, now going about with the seal of death on his forehead—of course, he will be only too glad to avenge his wrongs and ensure his safety. What do you think of the plan, Abdul?"

"Let him go," laconically answered the Ressaldar; "we shall gain nothing by hanging him, let us see what he can do."

"If I could only get fair information of Beni Sing's whereabouts, and could tackle him in open fight, I should be better pleased; I like not this underhand sort of work, but Government would haul me over the coals if I did not do my level best any way to circumvent this brute, so I suppose we must try the plan. Well, Jorawur, what do you propose to do?"

"The prisoner must escape to-night—a knife will cut his ropes, the sentry will

look another way—I will join him at the first field beyond the mango grove, and then let the Sahib wait for news.”

“All right, Jorawur; the Ressaldar Sahib and you must manage the affair; but I shall be glad to give you a handsome reward, if you can manage to lure Beni Sing and his men out, where we can get them fairly.”

The prisoner was a big, beetle-browed man, bull-headed and broad-shouldered, a good sample of the material of which gladiators were made in ancient days, not the sort of man to be easily made prisoner, had he not been felled to the ground senseless by a blow from the butt-end of a musket.

He had been a sort of crony of Jorawur's in the old days, for he was a Shikari too, and they had made several trips together, in one of which, Jorawur's ready hand and dauntless courage saved him from death.

They were short of firewood, and had gone into the jungle to cut some; the prisoner, Drigpāl Sing, carrying a pole, to the end of which the faggots, when cut, were to be attached and slung over his shoulder, while Jorawur carried an axe.

Turning a clump of bushes, the two men were electrified by an angry roar, and a tiger, whom they had disturbed at his meal off a deer, sprang at them. Drigpāl Sing instinctively presented his pole, which by accident ran into the brute's open mouth and half down his throat. The stalwart Dacoit was thrown to the ground by the impetus of the spring, but before the brute could get free from the staff that half-choked him, Jorawur sprang forward, and heaving up the axe, buried the keen blade in the tiger's skull, and saved the life of his comrade.

The only man who wished to intercede with the Nawab for Jorawur was this same Drigpāl Sing, but Beni Sing had pushed him aside with an oath, telling him savagely to mind his own business, or the Nawab would have his nose off too.

Then came the insult offered to his sister, and from high words with his chief, he came to blows, and the Dacoit leader had had him tied down and flogged with ramrods. The men sullenly acquiesced in his punishment, and continued with the band; for where else could he go? They were outlaws, living with



halters round their necks, they must keep together or be slain.

Drigpāl Sing would have had no thought of betraying his leader, had not his old comrade appeared on the scene. At first he could hardly believe that it was Jorawur, of whose mutilation he had been a witness; and the replacing of the Shikari's nasal organ did more towards convincing the prisoner of the wonderful powers of the British as a nation, than anything else could have done. To make a man's nose grow again on his face after it had been cut off, was superhuman; and, therefore, the English must be invincible, for they were not ordinary mortals according to the usual standard. So he listened to the persuasions and arguments of Jorawur, and in the end agreed to return to the band, giving, from time to time, such information as would ultimately result in the capture of the chief.

Jorawur was to accompany him, and furnished with a few days' provision at a time, was to lurk in the vicinity of the robber camp, from whence his friend could occasionally emerge to meet him.

At midnight two indistinct forms,

wrapped in dark blankets, stole out of the gloom of the grove, carefully avoiding the sentries, and struck off across country towards the black belt of forest that loomed in the distance.

Beni Sing's stronghold was a conical hill forming the terminal point to a spur which ran out from a densely forest-clad range. Strategically the place was well-chosen, for from the highest peak the sentinel commanded a view of the surrounding country for miles, and the only way by which a foe could approach unseen, was by the hills and across the narrow neck which connected the isolated peak with the spur, and this point was well guarded by outposts. The natural difficulties of the place had been increased by defensive works of solid masonry, of a style and massiveness which told of an older time than that of which we write.

Bhalugarh was in fact one of the old, aboriginal fortresses which, in the primitive ages, before the use of fire-arms, had been quite impregnable, and, in the hands of resolute defenders, were still very awkward places to take.

They had fallen into ruin, especially under the peaceful rule of the British, and were now only taken possession and made the most of by fugitive bands of men, who, fighting with halters round their necks, betook themselves to hills and caves, to fight to the bitter end.

Jorawur and his friend parted before they came to the outpost, and the latter went on.

As he toiled up the steep road leading to the crest of the hill immediately dominating the rock which joined Bhalugarh with the main chain of mountains, he was suddenly arrested by the challenge "Kōn hai?" and in the gloom appeared several glowing stars, as the matches of firelocks were blown upon.

"Kōn hai?" again rang out the challenge.

"Arré bhai! hum hai, Drigpāl Sing; aor kōn?" ("Why, brother! it's myself, Drigpāl Sing; who else?") and in a few minutes the picket were eagerly welcoming back the man whom they had, to use a mercantile simile, written off their books some days ago.

"Wah! bhaya! we thought you were

killed or, if taken prisoner, hanged by the Sirkar."

"So I should have been if I had stayed two more watches with them, but Perinessur was good, and some one dropped a knife by accident within my reach, so I cut my ropes and slipped away in the dark, and here I am. Where's the Jemadar Sahib?"

"Oh, he's up there. He's been amusing himself by torturing an old Bunniah from a village down below; but the old fellow is tough, and will not confess where his wealth is hid."

"Yes," broke in one of the party, "he has stood the beetle torture, and red-hot ramrods, and sprinkling with boiling oil, and the Jemadar Sahib is now downright savage with him. I don't know what he will do to-morrow."

"Well, brothers," replied Drigpāl, "I will go on and report myself to the chief, and give him what news I have of the Sirkar."

"Ram, ram bhai!" chorussed the party, as he went on, and some of the picket coiled themselves up to sleep again. Two remained on guard, and the others pre-

pared and smoked an early morning pipe to keep the damp out.

The morning star was paling in the grey streaks of dawn as Drigpāl Sing toiled up the hill. Half way up was a strong wall, made of cubes of granite clamped with iron, a style of masonry which belonged to those good old days, both in Europe and India, when lath and plaster erections were unknown, and scampish contractors dared not to put ashes in mortar and layers of rubbish for solid brick, for fear of losing their heads.

A narrow gateway, flanked by two semi-circular bastions, admitted the traveller to the inner works. He was here challenged again, but, being recognized, was warmly greeted, and many wondering questions were put regarding his escape. Hastily replying to some of the queries, and avoiding others, Drigpāl Sing pressed on, and on the summit of the hill came upon a cleared space containing about a dozen huts, the occupants of which were now performing their ablutions and morning devotions in the rays of the rising sun.

Before one of these, of larger size and more substantial build than the rest, sat

on a *charpai* Beni Sing, undergoing the attentions of the barber of the camp. The chief's sword and shield lay within reach, for the life he led made the Dacoit unhappy if far from his weapons ; otherwise he was peacefully attired in the scantiest of waist-cloths, preparatory to the morning bath. The barber, who was profoundly ignorant of all western nostrums for the advancement of his art, and who had no substitute for Lloyd's Euxesis, and not even an apology for honest, hard, ill-smelling bar-soap, but who dipped his hands into the pure, spring-water contained in his little brass cup, and titillated his patron's cheeks with the backs of his fingers, was just about to apply his dumpy little spud of a razor, when Beni Sing gave a grunt of astonishment, as his supposed-to-be-lost follower made his appearance.

“Arré! Ram! Drigpāl Sing Bhai! where have you come from? I thought you were hung by this time; few of us escape the noose who fall into the hands of the Sirkar.”

Before the new-comer had time to reply, there was a rush made from all sides, as his old comrades caught sight of him, and they formed a ringround him and his leader.

“ Well, Jemadar Sahib, I am here safe enough, but had I not picked up an old knife which some one dropped near me, and managed to cut my ropes and slip away in the dark, I should have been hanging just now. Bhugwan was good, and I vow a pilgrimage to holy Kasi (Benares) some day.”

“ Ah, when you’ve got a little more plunder, eh, Bhai ? and then Gunga Maya will wash away all your sins. Ram duhai ! I should like to do *tirath Kasi* myself, but one is so closely watched by these accursed troopers that there is no going about.”

Thereon followed a string of questions about the soldiers and their officer, which Drigpāl Sing answered circumstantially. Then he in turn asked what the band had been doing in his absence.

“ Well,” laughed Beni Sing, “ we have not done much, but we carried off that fat Bunniah who owns the village of Piperkhunta, an enormously rich old fellow, and had some fun with him. Hai, hai ! if only poor Jeswunt Sing and Juggernath had been alive now, they would have enjoyed it ; but Sewsahoy is a bungler at torturing, and I am afraid he has done the old fellow some damage. So I have just sent him

down to his village with instructions to pay up ten thousand rupees, or I will sack and burn his place to-night, and carry off all his womenkind, and a rare pretty daughter he has got, the old, fat buffalo !”

Drigpāl’s heart swelled within him as he thought of the treatment his sister had experienced, but he stifled his emotion as he answered,—

“ Was that wise ? he will get assistance and resist you.”

“ Not he ; why his village is miles away from the troops, quite on the other side of the range, and none of his neighbours would dare to interfere on his behalf. So if the money be not forthcoming by sunset, we will come down upon him.”

After some further conversation, in which Beni Sing unfolded his plans for the attack, Drigpāl Sing adjourned to his hut, where he found his particular chum and messmate in possession. From him he learnt further particulars regarding the outrage on the old landlord. The old fellow was very tough and would not give in, but at last he promised to pay ten thousand rupees ; he was, however, nearly dying when taken down to his village.



The men who carried him said he was almost gone when they left him in charge of some herdsmen they met.

After a meal, Drigpāl Sing, having borrowed his companion's matchlock and some ammunition, appeared again before the captain of his band, and asked permission to look for venison.

"Wah, brother," exclaimed the chief, "you have just escaped from the clutches of the Sirkar, and instead of resting after your fatigues, you want to go out roaming after deer. What a fellow you are!"

"Jemadar Sahib, if you had been on short commons of food for three days as I have, you would wish for a bit of meat, too. I have just got a longing for meat; bread does not satisfy my craving. Of course, if I get nothing, it is my fate; but I passed some *chital*<sup>1</sup> this morning near the river, and if I can get one, I will bring it to you and take a little for myself."

"Very well, brother. I am glad it is you who have the trouble, and not I. I like venison well enough when anybody will take the trouble to bring it to me."

Drigpāl's face wore a curious expression

<sup>1</sup> Spotted deer (*Axis maculatus*).

as he turned his back and strode down the hill with his matchlock on his shoulder.

Beni Sing yawned, and after rubbing a little dry tobacco in the palm of his hand with a modicum of shell-lime, he deposited the pungent dose in his capacious mouth as a stimulant and febrifuge, thrusting it into his cheek with his tongue, and then composed himself to rest.

He had grown stouter and greyer since we last met him, and his countenance showed the non-restraint of his passions, for cruelty and sensuality were deeply imprinted in its lines.

When in a jocular mood his face wore an oily leer, which was almost as repulsive as the ferocious scowl and wolfish curl of the lips, that would come over him when his temper was ruffled.

His authority over his band was supreme, and no fiat of his, even though it carried death with it, was ever disputed by his men, who were doubly bound to him by their oath of allegiance, and by the common bond of the halter round their necks.

But he had strained his authority a little too far at times without knowing it. There were some who had accepted punishment

silently, but in whose hearts the memory of it rankled constantly.

The day passed, and the sun was barely a spear's length above the horizon, and yet no messenger had come with the stipulated ransom.

Beni Sing had finished his afternoon meal, and was strapping on his arms.

His face showed no disappointment at the non-receipt of the money, for he rather enjoyed the prospect before him of sacking the old Bunniah's village and carrying off his family. He had placed scouts to watch the place and see that no one left it, and as these had not returned, he felt sure of his plans.

His men were mustering in groups, belting swords and slinging on shields and fire-arms. Some were preparing small resinous torches with which to fire the houses, others were putting sharpening touches to spear-points.

At a call from their leader they all assembled, and he heading the band, they marched down the hill as the sun dipped over the western horizon.

The Malgoozar, or land-owner, of Piper-khunta had gone to the neighbouring town on market-day, but he had not returned by

nightfall, so his wife and daughter, being alarmed at his unusual absence, sent the *cotwal*, or village watchman, to see what had become of him. The man returned in the morning without any explanation of the mystery. He had been at the fair, and had been seen to leave, but as he had gone away alone, no one could say what had become of him. Possibly a tiger might have carried him off, as occasionally tigers did come down on that part of the road which passed through a belt of jungle.

So the women beat their breasts and tore their hair, and loud were the lamentations for the lost head of the village.

A day passed in search and wailing, and on the following forenoon some herdsmen ran in for assistance. The Malgoozar had been brought in a *duli* by some strange men, who put him down and left him; but he was very ill, and senseless.

A crowd rushed forth from the village, and half a dozen able-bodied men lifted up the litter and carried the old man home. He did not, however, reach his door alive, senseless and speechless they found him, and the breath was out of his body when they put him down.

They carried him forth again that evening to place him on the funeral pyre which had been prepared some distance from the village, on the banks of a small river.

How he came by his death none could say. The men who brought him said not a word to the herdsmen; they simply put him down and left him. All that they were certain of was that he was dead, and had to be cremated, so conjecture, speculation, and action were laid aside for the moment in the bustle of preparation. A few of the elders shook their heads and whispered amongst themselves that Beni Sing had had something to say to the matter, and it would be well for them to be on their guard, and to send word to the nearest police-station. However, to-morrow would be time enough, so they thought.

In the gloom of a moonless night the procession set forth, with the wailing of women and with plaintive music. The bier was carried by eight men, who relieved each other by fours, chanting the usual dirge, "Ram Ram such hai,"<sup>2</sup> to which the crowd following responded "Ram Ram such hai!" then the bearers took up the

<sup>2</sup> Rama (the god) is true.

cry again, and the followers repeated it, and so on they wended their way towards the river side, till all the welkin rang with the wild plaint, "Ram Ram such hai!"

The pyre was reached, the necessary ceremonies were performed, the body was placed in position and the faggots drenched with *ghi*,<sup>3</sup> the eldest son of the deceased applied the torch and the flames sprang upwards, and in a few minutes enveloped the whole.

All were looking eagerly at the burning pile on which the form of the old Malgoozar grew more and more indistinct; at last some of the mourners turned their faces homewards, and then a cry of surprise and despair rose from their lips. Had they not been dazzled by the bright light in front of them, they would have noticed a red glow in the sky overhead. Their village was in flames.

All turned at the cry, and the shout arose, "*Hai! hai! Daku! daku!*"

("Alas, alas! Dacoits, dacoits! Robbers, robbers!")

Beni Sing was a man of his word. If he threatened to burn a village unless some condition was performed, the threat was

<sup>3</sup> Buffalo butter melted.

invariably carried out, if his demand was not complied with. And this was well known in that part of the country, so that if the villagers of Piperkhunta had only known of the compact made by their Malgoozar, they would have endeavoured to raise the ransom in time, or put themselves into a position to resist.

But no one knew, and it only now dawned on their minds that the landlord was the bearer of an ultimatum which had been disregarded.

Beni Sing had watched his opportunity, and as the funeral procession left the village, he boldly marched in, knowing, that with the exception of a few old women and children, and maybe an inferior old man or two, all would be away.

He had not known of the death of his victim till he saw the funeral pass out, and then, instead of feeling regret, he exulted in the thought that his plans would be favoured by it. The female relatives of the Malgoozar would be left alone in the house, as it would not have been proper for them to assist in the obsequies, and therefore, he was sure of his prize, the Bunniah's daughter.

The wailing of the women in the Malgoozar's house was rudely interrupted by the entrance of a dozen armed men, who without ceremony seized and bound them tight.

"Which is the Malgoozarin?" asked Beni Sing.

None answered.

He went up to a nervous-looking young woman, and, putting a formidable knife to her throat, with the keen edge just pressing on the skin, repeated his question.

"She is there! she is there!" shrieked the terrified girl, pointing out a fat old woman, whose shrieks had been stopped by some of the gang, by cramming part of her dress into her mouth, and binding it there by string.

Beni Sing walked up to her and touching her sharply in the side with the point of his knife, gave her one of his most diabolical scowls, and asked her where her husband's money was hid.

The old woman vigorously shook her head.

"Take out the gag from her mouth," said the Dacoit chief. It was done, and the old creature raised a piteous wail which was brought to an end by a thundering



“Silence” from Beni Sing, accompanied by a sharp prod of his knife.

Such ornaments as the women wore were speedily torn from them, and then the question was again put to the old woman regarding the family hiding-place.

But she vowed she did not know.

Beni Sing said something to one of his followers, who immediately began to tear up one of the women's veils and to wrap the strips round the old woman's legs, then they poured on oil and proceeded to set her on fire. They were going to roast her piecemeal alive; the daughter—a pretty young girl of sixteen—could stand the horrors of the situation no longer, but shrieked out, “I know! I will tell! I know! don't, oh don't set my mother on fire.”

But the old woman sternly rebuked her. Why did she trouble her head about matters that did not concern her. She knew nothing about her father's money; he had none; had he not taken all that was in the house a few days before to the government office to pay his half-yearly rent?

But the Dacoits were on the scent now,

and with threats and bodily torture they got the girl to confess that in a certain corner was buried whatever money her father had.

Whilst the robbers dug for the booty, the old Malgoozarin heaped an abundance of curses on her weak-hearted daughter, which were redoubled as the Dacoits unearthed jar after jar full of rupees and gold and silver ornaments. They should have cut her to the smallest pieces before she would have parted with a single silver coin, and here this faint-hearted child of her's had calmly given up the gains of the thrift of years.

But her angry vituperation was soon turned to a wail of anguish, as the robbers laden with spoil left the house, carrying off her daughter with them—she was the only woman taken.

The shrieks of the poor girl rang in the agonized mother's ears as lying bound hand and foot on the floor she found herself bereft of husband and daughter, and wealth; but there she was left to burn to death, as one of the Dacoits passing out from the door stuck a blazing splinter into the thatch. And she would have burned

to death had not one of her handmaids, who had hidden herself in a corn-bin, crept out amid the stifling smoke, hastily untied the old woman, and raised her from the floor. The two passed out into the street to find themselves alone amid blazing houses and the wild stampede of affrighted herds. Of men there were none, not even the Dacoits, for Beni Sing, having got what he wanted, had ordered a hasty retreat.

The love of booty had enticed away many of the band into the better class of houses in the village, and it was some little time before Beni Sing could gather his men, but at last they all assembled in an adjoining field and commenced their retreat. At this moment an ominous sound of horse-hoofs awoke them to a sense of danger, they looked to their matchlocks and swords, and hurried onwards at a run.

How they now cursed their recklessness in setting the village on fire, for as hut after hut got ablaze, the old landscape was illumined, and it would be long ere they could get out of the influence of the bonfire they had created.

It was all the insensate folly of their

chief, who in his reckless bravado would carry out his threats to the letter.

Could they but reach yon dark belt of jungle they would be safe.

Still a quarter of a mile remained, perhaps with great exertion it might be done. Panting they strained over the heavy ploughed land, and fear lent wings to their feet as the dreaded bugle of the cavalry rang out in their rear. Louder and louder came the thunder of the horses, and as they looked back at the black line that stood out in bold relief against the fiery background, they could see the glint of the swords and spear-heads that in another minute would be wreaking vengeance on them. Like wild animals at bay they turned, and animated for a second with the spirit of resistance, they fired a smart volley at the advancing foe, but it did not check the onward rush of the troops, and terror-stricken all broke and fled, in spite of the commands and curses of their leader.

Throwing down the bundles which most of them had collected, the demoralized robbers raced for dear life across the intervening space between them and the forest,

but only one man, by his superior strength and length of limb, reached that shelter. Those who were not taken prisoners were cut down without mercy, and as Beni Sing bounded into the covert, the spear of a trooper was within a few feet of his back.

Baffled, the horseman drew rein and wheeled to join his comrades, but two men sprang off the horses they rode and plunged into the thicket after the flying outlaw.

Stealthily they followed him, not pressing too close, and avoiding all noise, still keeping him not so much in sight as within hearing.

At last, breathless, the fugitive stopped, and his pursuers stopped too.

All was still, save in the distance the hum of voices told of the excitement that prevailed in the village below.

The two men crept a little closer, but with such cat-like tread as not to crush even a withered leaf.

Regaining breath the Dacoit started again; he wished to reach his stronghold by dawn, and before the troops could be after him, that he might save a portion of his wealth and some of his dear ones;

for this man, cruel and sensual as he was, and apparently devoid of all the softer natural feelings, lavished a wealth of affection on a small child of three years of age, his son by his youngest wife. As he thought of his boy he dashed onward in his efforts to reach his home; but every turn of the dark forest seemed as familiar to the two men on his track, and steadily they followed him up.

Beni Sing toiled up the hill panting with the unwonted exertion, he was stouter than formerly, and though still muscular he was not as long-winded as in his more youthful days. A torrent of rage, too, filled his breast, and made his breath come and go more quickly, as he felt that treachery had brought him to this pass, that some one belonging to the band had brought the soldiers on him. *That* some one he knew, and he ground his teeth with hate as he thought of him.

He had now come to the foot of the peak, to the summit of which were two roads. One took a curve round a precipitous rock, the other was a mere goat track leading straight up, but which required a good mountaineer to climb.

Beni Sing hesitated—time was precious—still he thought that perhaps the longest way round would in the end prove the shortest way home, so he took it.

The two men instantly took the short way.

Dawn was beginning to break in the eastern sky, and the morning breeze blew soft and cool on the fevered brows all so intent on their work of life and death. The panting fugitive, as he toiled round the point, felt it chill the clammy dew on his forehead; the two agile forms climbing hand over hand the rugged cliff were refreshed by it, and redoubled their efforts.

The feathered heralds of the dawn were clearing their throats, and the valleys were ringing with the cries of the black cuckoo and jungle fowl.

Beni Sing heeded them not, but strode on full of his own black thoughts.

At one point he started and looked around; he thought he heard a rustle in the bushes behind him, but it was all calm and still; he went on, and a stalwart figure barred the way.

Beni Sing's hand dropped to his sword-

hilt, and the bright blade flashed out in the morning light.

“Thou hast betrayed me,” he yelled, with a voice hoarse with rage, as Drigpāl Sing, drawn sword in hand and shield on arm, confronted him.

“As thou betrayedst my sister and thy friend,” tauntingly replied the other.

They flew at each other like two tigers.

Beni Sing was the better swordsman, and he drove his foe back step by step. Drigpāl's companion sprang out of his concealment, and tried to get near, but the blades of the tulwars whirled over head and back, and he shrank from the encounter. At last the Dacoit beat his antagonist down, and the next blow would have decided his fate, when the on-looker sprang forward and buried his knife in the outlaw's back.

Beni Sing, mortally wounded, turned savagely on his new assailant, when his jaw dropped and his hand fell nerveless, as Jorawur stood before him. Not Jorawur, the mutilated, half-dead creature that had been flung out of the gateway at Asālgurh, whose nose and ears he had seen lying on the floor of the courtyard, but Jorawur as



he was when he first enlisted in his band, Jorawur Shikari with his nose on his face!

This was a devil, a demon come to destroy him: who had ever heard of a man's nose growing again on his face? No! Jorawur was dead, this was his *bhūt*—his spirit. But his emotion was only momentary. Drigpāl Sing sprang to his feet and taking advantage of his adversary's confusion, dealt him a trenchant blow on the neck, and the dreaded Dacoit chief sank with a groan, his dying orbs fixed with a glassy stare on the man who had come back to earth to avenge himself.

As Fred Scamperby paced in front of his tent that evening smoking his cigar, the two Shikaris presented themselves before him. They untied a bundle, and laid a ghastly object at his feet—it was the head of Beni Sing!

## CHAPTER XVII.

A YEAR before the death of Beni Sing, Abdul Rahim, during a cessation of hostilities, had got leave to revisit his home. He had been promoted to his troop and was the youngest and bravest Ressaldar in the service, and was decorated with the Order of Merit, the coveted reward of conspicuous gallantry. With what rapture did the aged Hakim and his wife welcome back their grandson after his long absence. How they lingered over his adventures, plying him with question upon question! Their lives, with few exceptions, before the death of the Munshi, had been so uneventful. At one time they had had their troubles, and sorrow had darkened their doors, but the clouds had passed away, and the beneficent Allah, the giver of all good, had poured sunshine over their dwelling. Those whom they had mourned as lost had been restored with honour, and those who had

been against them, Allah had judged and disposed of. So the aged couple, growing in infirmity, went on in their usual routine of benevolence, thankful and hopeful, praying daily for the safe return of their beloved grandson.

Fazilla was with them, and was the light of their house. Amiable she had been, but her character of late had become so self-denying and thoughtful for others, and so patient under vexations, that she excited the admiration of all those who knew her. The fame of her learning had been spread abroad and somewhat exaggerated. Had she not books in various languages? and did not the postman frequently bring her letters in English? This was a wonderful thing amongst a people whose women were brought up in ignorance.

Fazilla and Abdul Rahim corresponded always in English. They found it more convenient for many reasons. In the first place a letter addressed in English was much more likely to reach its destination through the agency of the local postman, than one in the native character. And then English was little known to any

of the neighbours, so stray letters would afford but slight temptation to the gossips of the place.

However, the necessity for correspondence was now over for a time, and the lovers were once more together.

They were to be married before Abdul returned to his regiment, and the Hakīm had saved up a certain sum of money, to carry out the ceremony in a befitting style. Amina Bibi and Amirūn were full of the impending ceremonies, but Fazilla longed for the quieter ritual of her adopted faith.

She had not acknowledged herself a Christian to the Hakīm's family, although they knew that she read the Christians' scriptures, but she had paved a way in her letters to a confession to Abdul Rahīm before her marriage, and since his return they had had several earnest conversations on the subject. He had no objection to her conversion beyond the rupture that it might cause between them and his family, and he advised that they should keep the matter a secret till the Hakīm's death, which at his age might occur soon. He himself was not a bigot, but he thought

his religion as good, if not better, than any other, so why did she wish to change?

“ Because the other is the true religion,” urged Fazilla.

“ How do you know it is the true religion, there is but one God. There is no other, why should you worship another, nay, three. Allah, Hazrat Isa (Christ), and Bibi Miriam (the Virgin Mary). This is not right. Even the Bible says, ‘ I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me.’ ”

“ But I do not worship three,” pleaded the girl. “ I worship One alone, and I do not worship Bibi Miriam at all. I only reverence her as one favoured of Allah, as we all do. But the Christian religion has the difficulty of three apparent gods, which was a sure point of doubt with me before Lady Stanford explained it. It is the same One God who is worshipped under three phases, God the Creator, God the Example, and God the Comforter and Guide. The first phase and the last were and are unseen. But it was necessary for God the Example to appear in fleshly form, so that He might show people how to walk,

and oh ! my lord and love, if you would but compare His life with that of our prophet Mahomed, you will see how much better it was. For whom did He take to wife on earth ? When did He fall and sin ? Who hath ever wrought miracles like unto Him ? Why do we call Him "*Ruh Allah*" the Spirit of God, and *Kalamat-Ullah*, the Word of God, and then despise his followers, and say that Mahomed only is to be followed, and that the Quran only is to be our guide ? "

"Hazrat Mahomed came after Hazrat Isa, and the Quran abrogated all the foregoing scriptures," remarked Abdul.

"Nay then, why is it not perfect ? I have studied it carefully of late, and find it full of contradictions. There are inconsistencies in the Bible, but it is a work of many hands, and not in its original tongue, but if the Quran be a direct revelation from God to Mahomed, it ought to be perfect, and not contradictory, nor ambiguous as we read it in its original language. I cannot help thinking that Mahomed would have been a Christian, but that being ambitious, he wished to found a religion of his own."

"Then, do you disbelieve in the Quran

as a divine revelation entirely?" asked Abdul in astonishment.

"Entirely," was the calm reply.

The young man was staggered for a second, as the earnestness of his future wife told him that as matters stood there would henceforth be a gulf between them in spiritual belief.

"That is a hard decision you have come to," he said gravely. "Think of the thousands of men more learned than you or I, who hold to the Divinity of that book which you now cast aside as a tissue of lies."

"I cannot help it," answered Fazilla, "they must be blind. I have passed hours whilst you have been away, my Abdul, studying these sacred scriptures, the Quran and the Bible side by side. I see how much in the Quran is taken from the other, and I cannot help seeing how much is written for time-serving purposes. I cannot help seeing that Christ is so perfect and that Mahomed is so imperfect, and, therefore, I cling to the words of the perfect One in preference to those of the other. Christ teaches us lessons of love Mahomed teaches us lessons of hate. It is not good

to bless and curse with the same breath, and when Mahomed, who first tolerated the Christians, afterwards cursed them, he committed a sin against God."

"It is a very difficult question, my life, that you have taken up. Our religion forbids us to revile Hazrat Isa, who was singular amongst the prophets, who was of miraculous birth, and was preserved in his fleshly form incorruptible, who was pure in life, and was, we acknowledge, the Spirit of God, and yet we do revile and despise his followers."

"And yet, do you not think," replied Fazilla, "that if Hazrat Isa is all that we say, and is so favoured of Allah as we make out, that He is more powerful with the Almighty than our Prophet Mahomed, that He is angry with us for our enmity to His followers, and that is the reason why the Christians are always more successful in all that they do than the Moslems are?"

"It may be so," returned the young man; "it may be so. It is a matter we must think over by-and-by. In the meantime, my loved one, vex not the hearts of the



old people who have reared us. Let us keep this to ourselves till after their death, and then we will decide. I have no objection to your professing the Christian religion. It may be the best or it may not, at all events let us be Muslim for the present."

Fazilla sighed as she gave in. She felt like Naaman the Syrian in the house of Rimmon. Was it right that she should hold back from her confession? Yet when Naaman said, "When I bow me in the house of Rimmon the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." The man of God had answered, "Go in peace." Why should she therefore bring sorrow and dissension in the house of those who had been so good to her. Yes, she would wait; and Abdul? was he not almost won? There was much comfort in the thought. At present, he was wanting in religious fervour of any kind, but she would bring him to her fold at last, and it would be better for him when his high position under a Christian Government would enable him to defy public opinion amongst his countrymen, from which at present he seemed to shrink.

So the days wore on and the time for their marriage approached. But it was not to be yet. A letter came to Abdul one morning from Captain Scamperby, urging him to rejoin, as there was some important service to be done, the nature of which he could not then divulge, and he wanted his favourite native officer with him.

The elders, as was but natural, tried to dissuade their grandson from leaving so soon, but the young man was firm. He was wanted on duty, and all private feelings must give way to his fealty as a soldier. Fazilla was sad at his departure, but when he told her his honour was at stake, she urged him no longer, and he hastily got his things ready and started without delay.

The only comfort to Fazilla in his sudden departure, was that it put off their marriage for a time, the mummery of which, according to the native custom, she shrank from. She longed to avow herself a Christian, and be married in the quiet Christian manner. The religious ceremonial of marriage amongst Mahomedans is simple enough. The Qazi or

judge, marriage being but a civil contract in Islam, the bridegroom and the bride by proxy, some one being attorney for her, assemble in a house (not in any religious edifice), and in the presence of witnesses ratify a contract, by which the marriage is undertaken and a certain dowry settled on the bride. The bridegroom has to repeat four short chapters from the Quran, the *Istigfa* or prayer for forgiveness, the creed, and a formula of general belief, and then after signing the contract, the Qazi pronounces the blessing,—

“O great God! grant that mutual love may exist between this couple, as it did between Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sara, Moses and Zipporah, his highness Mahomed Mustaffa and Aaysha, and his highness Ali ul Murtuza and Fatimauz-Zahura.”

All this is simple enough, but the matter does not end here. The ceremonies attendant on an Indian marriage are numerous, and in many instances most childish, lasting for days, and all this Fazilla wished to avoid.

The old Hakim and several of the lead-

ing townsmen, accompanied Abdul to the mail cart office, for he had chosen that mode of conveyance as being most expeditious.

The young officer was now a person of considerable importance in the eyes of his fellow townsmen, and they crowded round him to shake hands ere he mounted. The old Hakim poured forth a fervent blessing on his head, and the next moment he was galloping down the road.

The Darogah offered his arm to the old man as he turned towards home again, after watching his grandson with tearful eyes and prayerful lips, till a bend in the road hid him from sight. The Hakim took it, and for the first few steps neither spoke. At last the old man said in a voice faltering with emotion, "He is gone, it is the will of Allah. Blessed be his name. But I shall never see my boy again."

"Nay, nay, Hakim Sahib," rejoined the Darogah kindly. "You must not say such words. See how he has been preserved from all danger to come back covered with honour, and why should you fear for him now?"

"Oh friend, it is not for him that I fear. Allah will watch over him and bring him

back safe. But Is-ra-il the angel of death is whispering in my ear that it is time I should go. I shall not live till my boy returns, my time has come."

"Astaghfurullah!" what are you talking about? You are younger in health and spirits than I am, though you are a trifle beyond me in years. No, no, Shekhji, we cannot spare you yet. What will all the poor sick people about the place do when you are gone? Nay, their daily prayers to Allah will not be unheard, and you will be spared for many years yet."

The old man smiled sadly and shook his head. His professional skill warned him that he was breaking up, and that he must not expect to linger much longer on earth.

"Allah is very good, and he has blessed me beyond my deserts, but though this life has many pleasures, it has its trials, and I long for rest. The aged long for rest, my friend, the youthful for action."

"Ah well," replied the Darogah, "I fancy the repose of Paradise, with the damsels made of pure musk, filling constant cups of nectar that cheer but intoxicate not, is something for all of us to look forward to."

“Ah, but that is a young man’s Paradise,” answered the old Hakim gravely, shaking his head. “Wine and women form earthly bliss, why should that be all that Paradise gives? Nay, Allah forgive me. But I sometimes think that there has been a misunderstanding about the promises of Paradise. I would rather have my old wife with me than all the young Houris, and therein the Christians, who promise reunion with all that they have loved on earth, offer a more tempting prospect to an old man like myself. What makes it bitter for me to leave earth, but the thought of leaving those I love without any assurance that we shall meet again? but the will of Allah be done.”

“Amen,” answered the Darogah sententiously, “we shall see some day.”

Meanwhile Abdul sped on his way as fast as galloping horses could take him. The Indian mail cart is not a luxurious conveyance. A sort of gig made of sheet iron over a wooden framework, mounted on high wheels, forming a box for the mail bags, the lid of which was bisected by a low iron rail from side to side, form-

ing the narrowest of seats for four people sitting in pairs back to back; two horses are attached to the cart, one in the shafts and another harnessed to an outrigger pole, thus forming a lop-sided pair. The driver's only notion of that scientific process is to shake a handful of loose reins in one hand and crack a whip with the other, varied occasionally by an eldritch screech on a cracked bugle, by which means the horses are kept at full gallop,—the only endurable pace with these springless vehicles.

The ponies, for they are little else, are mostly of uncertain temperament, not to say demoniacal, and seldom start without the persuasion of ingeniously devised tortures, such as twitches, or lighting a wisp of straw under them. They are turned loose at the eight-mile stage, to saunter back leisurely to their own stables. One would hardly give the mild-looking creatures credit for so much obstreperousness. The iron horse has now in most places driven out the ill-used and much-abused *Ddk tatttu*, but taking him all in all he was a serviceable beast, and though a journey by mail cart is not the thing for weakly constitutions, we used to find it better

to rattle over 250 miles in thirty-six hours, than to make an eight days' journey of it in a luxurious though tedious palanquin. But it required an iron frame to do what Abdul had before him. Two hundred and fifty miles on the cart, eighty-three more on a camel, and then sixty on horseback before he reached the camp.

He took one day's rest after his mail cart ride, for he felt the want of sleep, having been two nights on the way; but he rode into camp within four days of his leaving Sasseram.

Fred Scamperby was delighted to get him back, for Abdul was more to be trusted than the rest in delicate matters, and then he was more English in his manner, and his courage was unquestionable. Altogether he had been greatly missed during his short absence, and his prompt return confirmed him still more in his commander's favour.

"You're a downright good fellow, Abdul," he exclaimed, as the Ressaldar stepped into the tent and saluted him. "You're a downright good fellow to leave your family and come back so soon, and if we make a good thing of this business, the government shall hear of your promptitude.



And now look here, don't repeat what I say, but we have got a chance of securing that Nawab who was in command at Asālgurh."

"What!" exclaimed Abdul with astonishment, "the Nawab Hyder Ali?"

"The very same man. He has dodged us long enough, but I think we are on his track now."

"Where is he?"

"He is in a fort about eighteen miles from here, but is very ill and unable to leave his bed. His force, however, is too much for us, and we have no guns, so I have written for reinforcements, and in the meantime I have got the fort closely invested by spies, who report on every movement about the place. Ah! here comes one of my men. I wonder if he has got any news."

The Sowar reined in his panting charger before the tent door, and without waiting to be formally admitted, threw himself off the animal's back and entered at once. At first he hesitated, seeing that his captain was not alone, but after a second, his eyes having recovered from the glare outside, he perceived that the other occupant of the tent was the

trusted Rëssaldar, so he saluted again and began,—

“Have I your lordship’s permission to speak?”

“Speak,” replied the captain laconically.

“He leaves the fort to-night.”

“Confound it,” exclaimed Fred, dashing his cigar-end out of the door. “But he shall not escape, if I have to attack ten times the number of men he has. Where is he going? When and how? Speak, man, speak.”

“Protector of the poor! He leaves this afternoon in the direction of Khama-ria. A guard of five hundred men, mostly rebel Sepoys, with him. He is to travel in a *duli*, being too weak to ride, and they halt to-night in the village of Selari.”

The English officer took out a case map and unfolded it, marking off the distances with a pair of compasses. He remarked to Abdul,—

“He will pass within eleven miles of this.”

“Let us cut him off,” replied the other. “It is true we are fewer in numbers, but we have beaten greater odds.”

Abdul’s face glowed with excitement

and the remembrance of his fatiguing journey was effaced at the thought of the adventure before them.

Fred struck a match and lit a fresh cigar. "Well, let us think over the plan to follow."

"Where's that old Shikari, Budhu Khan?"

"He's in camp, my lord," answered the Sowar.

"Send for him then."

The man went and soon returned with a little wizened old man, the principal hunter of the district, who was a keen supporter of the British rule, for he was paid so punctually for the destruction of noxious wild beasts.

"Now, Sheikh Ghulam, what is the country about Selari like?"

"My lord, it is all jungle about it, and the village lies like this," pointing to the centre of the palm of his hollowed hand. "Near the village is a grove of mango-trees, separated from it by a small stream."

"Is there any fort there?"

"No, my lord. Why it is only a little forest hamlet, the head man's house is not even of mud, only wattle and dab."

“So much the better, for the chances are there will be no accommodation in the village, and the man we want will encamp in the grove. Now, Abdul, in half-an-hour saddle and mount.

“Very well,” answered the Ressaldar, saluting, and leaving the tent, followed by the trooper and the Shikari.

But before he had gone many yards he was called back.

“I foresee one difficulty,” remarked the Englishman; “how are we to carry off the Nawab, supposing he be too ill to move? I don’t want to kill the man on the spot; let him have a fair trial—but carry him off we must if we can.”

“Of course you mean to surprise him by night?” said Abdul.

“Yes, my intention is to get close to the place and wait till dark; then make a sudden attack on the grove and carry him off if possible, *duli* and all.”

“We will do it,” decidedly replied the Ressaldar; “let us take *duli* bearers with us and leave them in some place near at hand. I will pick out eight or ten of our men, who will go in with us dismounted; in fact I think we shall have to attack dismounted,

for in the dark cavalry is of no use in a mango tope, if the enemy, panic-stricken, fly, as they will, we can go in and seize the Nawab, and get off with him to our rendezvous before his escort can rally. At all events, let us take the men."

"Very well, make your arrangements."

The trooper's report was a correct one. That afternoon the Nawab Syed Hyder Ali, a man broken down in health and spirits by the failure of all his grand aspirations, a proclaimed rebel, with a reward offered for his apprehension, and whose tall, powerful frame was now so reduced by disease, as to be helpless as that of an infant in the nurse's arms, fled from the fort where he had taken refuge, on hearing that a force had been sent to attack him.

After the midday meal the sortie was made, and it was dusk when Selari—a little-known, isolated hamlet—was reached.

Here he expected to rest for some hours in safety, for the march had been a tedious one, over rocky hills, and through tangled forest; so it was with a sigh of relief he felt the *duli* put down under the mango grove, and after partaking of a little cool sherbet prepared by one of his servants,

the Nawab dropped off into a doze, for he was very tired. The excitement of the morning had disturbed him much, and then the subsequent jolting over rough roads and cattle-tracks, had thoroughly fatigued him, so he closed his eyes and fell into a light slumber.

The commander of the Sepoys told off a guard of five and twenty men, which he posted near the duli, and the rest of the escort went off to forage in the village.

As night fell the grove contained less than thirty men, including the sleeper, his servants, and the guards.

The rest of the Sepoys were busily engaged in the village plundering the grocer's shop. There was little to take, save the simple goods required by the rustics, flour and pulse, turmeric, and a few spices, with molasses and a little raw sugar.

The inventory would not have taken long to make, and an English auctioneer's apprentice would have turned up his nose, and perhaps held it too, at some of the items; but the poor distracted owner of the shop considered himself a sort of Whiteley, and moaned piteously over the spoliation of his stores.

As this little scene of injustice, at that time unhappily but too common, was being enacted, a small force was quietly marching up to the village.

Leaving half his troops a few hundred yards from the entrance to the little valley in which Selari was situated, Fred Scamperby dismounted the rest, giving each reserve trooper a spare horse to hold.

The dismounted men, armed with carbine and sword, advanced steadily to the attack, confident in their leaders.

Stillness reigned in the valley, save in the little hamlet, where the hum of voices showed where the bulk of the enemy were concentrated.

The mango tope seemed almost deserted, there was a slight glimmer in the gloomy depths, where the Nawab's servants were cooking some little delicacies for their master, and as the attacking force drew nearer they could discern in a transient flicker of light now and then the dim outline of the palanquin, and the dark form of the sentry standing beside it.

Onward they went, treading as silently as possible; already they were within musket-shot, when one of the troopers stumbled over a boulder and fell.

“Hookum der-r-r-r?” (who comes there), challenged the Sepoy.

No answer.

“Kon hai?” he shouted again in his own language, and then, as he heard the tramp of men, he fired!

Instantly a ringing shout broke from Fred's small band, as, pouring in a vigorous volley, they rushed on.

The valiant guard never stopped to unpile their arms, but fled towards the village.

The Nawab awoke in a fright to find himself pinned by the throat and forced back on to his *duli*, whilst a revolver was held to his head, and an unmistakably English voice told him to keep quiet or he should be shot. The next moment half-a-dozen stalwart troopers slung their carbines over their shoulders, and lifting the litter bore it away at a swift pace.

The retreat was covered by the rest, who kept up a vigorous fire on the retreating Sepoys.

The panic spread through the force, they were surrounded by the British—they had been tracked, they had been betrayed; their hour had come; these and similar




thoughts ran through the brain of each mutineer as he cast down the bread he was cooking, the flour he had just kneaded, or the bundle of plunder he had gathered, and flew in some cases to the piled arms, but in most to the jungle beyond the village.

Without a shot fired in return, Fred got back to his reserve, and the rebel Nawab was now firmly in his hands.

It was an anxious time, still, thanks to the stalwart *duli* men Abdul had provided, and who relieved the impromptu bearers at once on their rejoining the reserve, they threaded the jungle paths under the guidance of Sheikh Ghulam with considerable rapidity, and were soon beyond pursuit.

This was one of the most brilliant achievements of the mutiny, and had it not been a small affair, in an isolated place, it would have emblazoned in rich colours a page of that history. As it was, Fred got a brevet and Abdul a higher step in the order of merit, and the Nawab Syed Hyder Ali was made over to the civil authorities for trial.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

HYDER Ali had this in his favour, that he was carried off alone, and none of his followers were taken with him, otherwise it is more than probable that they would have witnessed against him.

He was tried formally and had counsel to defend him. The plea set up in his favour was that he was not the man; secondly, that if he were the man he had nothing to do with the massacre at Amānpur, and had moreover saved the life of an Englishman who was in his power.

The question of identity was one most difficult to prove. Two years of intense anxiety and distress had furrowed the cheeks and blanched the hair, and gave a decrepitude to the martial form, and the witnesses were few in number and undecided in opinion.

Jorawur Shikari was the most positive in his evidence, but there were others

who had seen the Nawab Hyder Ali as often who could not swear to this man.

Mr. Lufton deposed that he thought there was a great similarity to the man who was a passenger on board the steamer with them, who afterwards was at Amānpur, and who had a peculiar vein on his forehead, which stood out in moments of excitement, and so had the prisoner. Sir Paul Stanford had taken a sketch of the prisoner whilst at Florence in which this peculiarity was strongly marked, the production of that picture would go far towards proving the identity of the prisoner.

During the examination of the witnesses, and in fact throughout the proceedings, the prisoner wore a sort of wearied, listless expression, partly no doubt assumed, and partly caused by excessive weakness; but it did not escape Mr. Lufton that when he mentioned Paul Stanford's name and spoke about the picture, the accused gave a perceptible start and looked piercingly at him for a moment, during which time the serpentine vein on his forehead stood out clear and unmistakable.

The counsel for the defence, however,

made light of this circumstance ; it was by no means an uncommon mark, he had seen it on scores of people, the prophet Mahomed himself had such a vein, nay there was a gentleman in court, a gallant officer, who had such a vein running straight down his forehead, the thing was so common that he trusted the assessors would dismiss from their minds so slight a peg on which to hang an accusation, which might result in the death of a fellow-creature. His client denied that he was Hyder Ali, he was not bound to state who he was, the onus of proof lay with the prosecution, but admitting that he was Hyder Ali, what then ? he would for the sake of argument assume that his client was Hyder Ali, in that case was he worthy of condemnation ? the charge was that he was in rebellion against the government, but then Lord Canning had proclaimed an amnesty to all who were not guilty of the murder of Europeans ; the next graver charge was that he was guilty of the murder of the Amānpur residents ; let David Joseph, the sole survivor of that massacre, be put into the witness-box.

The drummer whose story we have al-

ready heard in these pages was then examined, and deposed that the Nawab was not present at the massacre, which was perpetrated by Subadar Bakr Mahomed, between whom and Hyder Ali there was ill-feeling. Bakr Mahomed was jealous of the Nawab, and with his Sepoys he overawed the guard sent by Hyder Ali, and committed the crime for which he had been executed. The witness had not heard of the Nawab having killed any one.

Mr. Lufton was next called and cross-examined as to the treatment experienced by Miss Lufton in the fort of Asalgurh, and whether he was not aware that Hyder Ali had saved the life of Sir Paul Stanford, by giving him his liberty, even personally escorting him to the British outposts, when he had been taken prisoner by the rebels ?

The counsel resuming his address, urged that it was by no means proved that his client was the man accused, and secondly, if he were, the charge of murder against him could not be substantiated, whereas acts of kindness telling in his favour could be proved, which would bring him fairly under the operation of the amnesty, even though he

had not taken advantage of it at the time of its promulgation. The court adjourned for further evidence. In the first place it was important to establish the identity of the prisoner, and the portrait referred to would be valuable as evidence, Sir Paul Stanford would therefore be communicated with for its production, if in existence. Then a commission would issue to the magistrate of Amānpur to examine all persons who were witnesses of the occurrences there, with a view to prove the complicity of the Nawab Hyder Ali. The prisoner in the meanwhile would be remanded to jail.

It happened that the court closed on the English mail day, and a letter was at once despatched to Sir Paul Stanford, requesting the production of the portrait.

After three months the answer came—

“ Sir,—I have the honour to inform you that prior to the receipt of your office letter, No. —, dated —, I had destroyed the portrait alluded to, it being an unpleasant reminder of a time we endeavour as much as possible to forget.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

PAUL STANFORD.”

And how was it that this valuable evidence was lost? the government prosecutor was extremely vexed, he had reckoned on making a great hit and winding up a telling peroration, by working up the prisoner to excitement, and then producing the likeness with the tell-tale vein starting out on the forehead.

This is how it was.

Paul and Grace were sitting at breakfast when the post arrived.

“The Indian mail!” exclaimed Grace, jumping up from her chair and nearly upsetting the precious baby, who, squatting on the floor, was industriously cramming a goodly portion of a founce of her dress into its tiny mouth. “The Indian mail, and a letter from papa!”

“Hold hard,” said Paul, laughing, as he picked up his sprawling first-born, “you little boa-constrictor you’ve been trying to swallow your mother, which is reversing the order of things in snakedom, where the mother usually swallows her babies; there cut your teeth on that,” he continued; sitting down again with the little fat ball on his knee, giving it a bright tea-spoon, which of course went at once into that

usual receptacle with babies and monkeys—another confirmation of Darwin.

“Oh, Paul dear,” exclaimed his wife, who was devouring her letter, “what do you think? Papa says the Nawab has been caught by Fred, and is to be tried immediately, and he is summoned to give evidence.”

Paul gave a long whistle, and quietly depositing Master Freddy on the floor, crossed the room to his wife’s side and looked over her shoulder.

Mr. Lufton wrote,—“I think it is the man, but he is much changed, looks twenty years older, is worn and haggard, and has a long grey beard, which alters the character of his face. The defence will be that he is not the man, but he has a suspiciously curious mark on his forehead at times, very slight, but it grows with excitement, and you remember Hyder Ali had that mark. I wish Paul would send me that sketch he took in Florence, it would help much in convicting the man, vein marks are not uncommon, but the peculiar serpentine shape would be corroborated by the picture. It is well known that Hyder Ali visited Europe just before the mutiny, and



in fact he was the man we saw in Florence and on board the P. and O. steamer. I feel certain the sketch would identify him."

Then followed a description of the details of the capture, with which the reader is familiar.


"Paul darling, what will you do?" asked Grace anxiously.

"I don't know, my pet, it wants thinking over; let's see the picture again."

He went into his studio, and returning with the sketch, placed it on the mantel-piece.

They both stood in front of it, he with his arm round her waist, for they were alone. It was the fashion at Longwood Hall not to have servants in the room at breakfast, which was a dilly-dallying sort of meal.

They stood and looked awhile in silence at the picture of the man who had for a time held both their lives in his hands. It was a vigorous sketch, crude somewhat, and lacking finish, but the likeness was telling, and just below the highest light on the forehead was the blue serpentine vein. Little did Stanford think when as a student he dashed off the likeness as a study that



it might prove one day the death-warrant to a fellow-creature, yet in this canvas was bound up a human life !

Grace broke the silence first.

“ You will not send it, Paul ? ”

“ Why not, darling, the man deserves to be punished, and it might be wrong of me to withhold evidence ; think of the atrocities this man sanctioned.”

“ Yet he spared your life, Paul ; if he had been thoroughly bad he would have killed you, and then what should I have done ? ”

“ Well, yes, little woman, I owe him one for that, but then as a set-off against it, there is his carrying you and your father off.”

“ Which saved our lives, Paul ; had he not done so, we would have shared the same fate as the rest, and he treated me with kindness whilst a prisoner, giving me even my piano and books.”

“ Yes, he was a civilized sort of ruffian I confess, and an uncommonly agreeable fellow he was when I first knew him, but I don't think I ought to withhold evidence.”

“ But Paul dear, it has not been asked for yet officially. Papa merely says ‘ I wish Paul would send me that sketch.’ Think

how horrid it would be if that poor man, so punished already for his ambitious designs, as papa says he is, how horrid it would be if we were the sole means of bringing him to the gallows ; let them find other evidence, if he has been so cruel they will not fail to bring it home to him somehow, they can do without our assistance.

Paul took the sketch from the mantel-piece and held it a moment in his hand as he looked into his wife's face.

“Then your advice is, Gracie—”

“To burn it,” was the decided answer.

In another second the canvas was shrivelling on the hot coals, and soon nought remained but a charred mass.

Grace Stanford flung her arms round her husband's neck, and kissing him, cried,—

“My darling, your conscience will tell you you have done right ; it would have been awful to be responsible for that poor wretch's death.”

And so it was that the portrait was not forthcoming at the trial.

The prisoner got off.

The prosecution had failed to prove completely his identity.

The complicity of Hyder Ali in the massacre at Amānpur could not be substantiated; no witnesses could be found to bear testimony to his having murdered any European.

But the fact remained, that whoever the prisoner was, he was a rebel taken in arms against the Government; of this there could be no doubt, and on this charge he was sentenced to transportation for life.

The sentence was, however, revised; there was strong presumptive evidence that he was Hyder Ali, although he persisted in calling himself by another name; and it seemed conclusively proved that Hyder Ali had no hand in the massacre at Amānpur, which was carried out personally by his rival Bakr Mahomed, also that he had been instrumental in saving the lives of three Europeans.

But the question naturally arose,—why did not the prisoner acknowledge himself to be Hyder Ali? it being manifestly the best thing he could do; there were so many points in his favour, that he stood a better chance of escape as the Nawab than as the unknown rebel. Still the

prisoner preserved a dogged silence on this point, he would not acknowledge himself to be the man for reasons best known to himself. But at all events the evidence in the hands of the Government was sufficient, and the sentence of transportation for life was altered to simple banishment from India.

He was shipped on board a vessel bound for Mecca, and bade farewell for ever to his native land.

About this time, Abdul received a letter from Fazilla which filled his heart with grief,—the Hakim was dead.

He had retired into his own little study, as was his custom daily at certain hours; but when Amina Bibi went to warn him that dinner was ready, she found him, as she thought, asleep. Fearful of disturbing him, she left him and went on with her household duties for a time; but her lord's dinner was getting spoilt, and she went again to wake him, and was struck by the same expression and posture; she put her hand on him, but he was icy cold; she shrieked aloud as the truth dawned upon her, and others came, but they only confirmed her suspicion. He was dead!

It must have been a sudden and painless death, for his face wore a calm expression; the eyes were closed, the brow was open, and a pleasant smile rested on his lips.

All would have thought him asleep, but it was the eternal sleep of death.

All Sasseram mourned for his loss, and hundreds of sorrowing townsmen followed him to the grave; the poor wept for their benefactor and physician, the rich for the friend and counsellor in whose simple honesty all put implicit faith.

Fazilla urged her betrothed to come back as soon as possible, for his grandmother was so prostrated by grief, that she was incapable of managing family affairs, and as there was no immediate call in view for his services, he was allowed a month's leave of absence.

The old Hakīm's affairs had been left in a well-ordered condition,—a state of things not always to be found amongst his countrymen—but he had evidently anticipated his death, and the most minute details of his estate and the arrangements he wished to be carried out, were found amongst his papers; this simplified matters very much,

and avoided useless and expensive litigation. Abdul had to go through certain formalities in Court, and then assumed his place as the head of the house.

His marriage was put off for a while on account of their recent loss. Meanwhile, he and Fazilla had reopened the question of their faith ; since he had left her, he had pondered deeply over the conversation he had held with his betrothed, and had longed to have some further discussion on the subject with some one sufficiently versed in the two theologies to give him a valued opinion. He knew none of his own co-religionists to whom he could apply. As a rule, Mahomedan theologians are given to hair-splitting their own commentaries, but repudiate all comparison with other scriptures ; with them it is blasphemy to test the Quran by Jewish or Christian writings, and therefore they remain wrapped up in a thick mantle of self-conceit, unable to give a fair opinion. Abdul felt this, and therefore he abstained from appealing to any of the moulavis of his own acquaintance. Had his English commander been another stamp of man, he might have gone to him, but he knew

---

that Fred Scamperby, as brave a soldier as ever drew sword, was hardly his own equal in intellectual matters, that he never opened a book, nor paid much attention to religious matters; therefore he had to keep his reasonings to himself till chance threw Mr. Lufton in his way at the trial of the Nawab.

The Commissioner welcomed the young soldier warmly, and asked him to pay him a visit and give him all the news about Fazilla. It was then that the Ressaldar opened his mind: his betrothed wife had become a Christian, and, moreover, she was extremely anxious that her husband should be one too, but he shrank from abjuring the faith of his fathers, and yet some things that she had said startled him greatly, and made him uneasy in his mind. Mr. Lufton had a long and earnest conversation with him, explaining at great length and with much patience the points on which the young man had most doubts, and finally presented him with some books on the subject.

Abdul went away, not quite convinced, but prepared to accept conviction if it could be brought home to him, for the



sake of living in unity of faith with Fazilla.

She, however, was the most earnest pleader; having greater depth of character than he had, she had gradually won upon him with the force of her arguments. She compared passages with him, and parried his thrusts with a dexterity which showed how keenly she had devoted herself to the subject; in fact, since she had given herself over to the new faith in which she so implicitly believed, her one thought had been to win over her future husband.

Another event, painful to them all, happened at this time, which hastened her victory over his hesitation. Amina Bibi, who had gradually drooped since her husband's death, passed from them almost as suddenly and quietly. After an illness of only two days the old woman died, blessing them with her last breath.

And so they were left alone, and the question now arose,—what was to be done with Fazilla when Abdul returned to his regiment?

But the girl decided this question at once. Now there was no reason why she should continue this deceit any longer, she

would boldly avow herself a Christian and seek the shelter of a Christian missionary's roof, till Abdul could return and claim her.

Lady Stanford had written to a friend of hers, the wife of a missionary, about Fazilla, and this lady had opened a correspondence with her: she would ask her advice, and if she would take her in, she would go to her.

What else could she do? she had no relations of her own that she knew of, and if she had, she would hesitate in putting herself in their power.

Abdul's great uncle, the Mahafez Duftie, was his nearest relation, but his house was no place for her. Abdul felt this, and he acquiesced in her writing to her friend; so she wrote and asked for shelter, even of a hut in her compound. She would be no expense to the Mission, for the rents of her property, the gift of Mr. Lufton to her father, were ample for her needs; all she wanted was a peaceful home till her husband could claim her.

A most warm-hearted answer came, begging her to join them at once.

They had a little house in the garden

for the children belonging to the Mission, with a suite of rooms at the end for a superintendent, but they had found they could do without a superintendent for a while, and so, with a little furniture, Fazilla and her servant would be very comfortable.

Amirun begged to be taken.

Fazilla explained to her that she had changed her faith, on which the old woman rated her at first a bit, and then declared that, Muslim or Kafir, she could not bear to part with her, and go she would.

“I suppose you don't intend to eat pig every day?” she snorted.

“No,” replied Fazilla with a smile, “my Christianity does not consist in eating things forbidden to Mahomedans; you may never see pig or any other forbidden meat in my house.”

“Ah, well then, I'll go,” answered the old woman mollified.

Of course there was much talk amongst the neighbours at the perversion of the Hakim's adopted daughter, and some were indignant, and declared her deserving of very harsh measures, but this was not

to her face, for she was rich and learned, and the rich seldom hear adverse opinions in any country, and still more so in Eastern lands. Others again took it as a matter of indifference if she chose to ruin her soul for the sake of cultivating the friendship of the rulers of the land; they rather envied her for her associations, but still, they thought she might have kept to her true faith; however, that was her concern, not theirs; and so it was a nine days' wonder, during which time Fazilla prepared for her journey, and Abdul made arrangements for the care of his house during his absence.

And they left Sasseram, not to return for many years.

Abdul, after leaving her in charge of the kind friends who promised to look after her, rejoined his regiment, and went off on the expedition which resulted in the death of Beni Sing.

## CHAPTER XIX.

WE have now to condense into one short chapter the leading points in the history of our characters for a period extending over about eighteen years.

So long a term of peace succeeded the troublesome times of which we have written, that the lives of most of the survivors of our story were calm and uneventful.

At Longwood Hall, the olive branches grew thick around the table. Sir Paul was growing portly and grey headed, but his wife kept her bonny face in defiance of time, and looked like the elder sister of her first-born.

Master Freddy, of whom we got a glimpse as a fat roly-poly baby, was now a tall, slim youth of seventeen, and Grace number two was a replica of her mother at sixteen. Then there were seven others—three boys and four girls.

In a small house within a short walk of the Hall lived Col. Scamperby, V.C., C.B., and

his wife, for he had married his first love, and poor Mrs. Bigger's happiest time dated from Fred's return. She was a bright, good-tempered little woman, yielding in disposition, and with an intense admiration for her husband. They had no children, and lived entirely for themselves. Her only difficulty was in restraining Fred, who had retired from the army, from rushing off to every war in Europe. So Fred stayed at home, smoking an unlimited amount of cigars; a constant visitor at Longwood, where he was a great favourite with the young folks, going to every review within a fair distance, varied by an occasional run up to town, where he would meet a lot of his old comrades at the club, and talk over old days and present measures.

The army is going to the dogs—it is indeed, tee-totally to the dogs. England is going down hill, and the Russians will tweak our noses for us some day, see if they don't. Fred and all his friends are afflicted with Russo-phobia.

Mr. Lufton, now an old man, lives chiefly in London, which he declares is the only place for an old Indian, but he spends a good deal of his time at Longwood.

Lady Stanford hears frequently from Fazilla, who is the mother of four children. She won over Abdul at last, and they were both baptized and married according to the Christian ritual. Her estate had turned out very valuable, they had a nice house built in the principal village, and Abdul, who had left the army, was one of the leading men in the district, an honorary magistrate, and was universally respected by both Europeans and natives. He had great decision of character added to much of his grandfather's benevolence, and he was much beloved by his tenantry, who flourished under his liberal rule.

Jorawur Shikari had been taken into Abdul's service as an overseer, and his admiration for his new nose has in no degree abated.

The Stanfords make periodical trips to Florence, and on one occasion when business called Signor Cardoni to England, he was a welcome guest at Longwood.

Paul had purchased a picturesque old Castello, about a couple of hours' rail from Florence, and Leonardo and Beppa were put in to take charge whilst the family was in England.

So time wore on pleasantly for all till at last a blow fell on poor little Mrs. Scamperby. She had come to look upon herself as quite a political character.

The disturbers of the peace of Europe disturbed her peace, and an ultimatum robbed her of many nights of rest, for whenever the war-trumpet was blown, Fred snorted like an old charger to be in action.

She had kept him with difficulty out of the Franco-Prussian campaign, and the Ashantee business; he had been very impatient during the Turko-Servian affair; but when the Russians declared war, Fred could be no longer restrained, and he fretted himself to such an extent, and smoked so many extra cigars to keep his temper cool, that at last his poor little wife confessed to Grace with tears, that sooner or later Fred would have to go, or he would wear himself to a shadow.

As the campaign with which we are all so familiar wore on, it appeared more and more likely that England would be drawn into the struggle, so Fred waited on an officer in high position at the Horse Guards and offered his services. Still there was delay and diplomatic fencing, and little



Mrs. Scamperby hoped the storm would blow over, when, one black-letter day, the postman came with a foreign-looking cover. Fred tore it open, and gave a shout of joy, whilst his poor little wife, divining what it was, rushed off to her bed-room, and burying her face in the pillows gave way to a burst of tears.

“Hallo, Nell; where are you gone to?” shouted her husband; “Nelly! come here, my girl, here’s news!”

The heart-broken wife sprang up and hastily dashing some cold water over her face, tried to wipe away traces of her emotion, and went down.

But Fred saw she had been crying, and his arm went round her at once.

“Why, you silly little mouse, you’ve been turning on the water-works.”

“Oh, Freddy, you won’t go, will you?”

“Won’t go! why, what do you know about it? who said anything about going?”

“Oh! don’t joke about it, Fred dear, I know as well as if I had read every line, that you have got an offer of something in this awful war.”

Then the tears broke out afresh.

“There, there, now, don’t cry about it,

there's a good girl. Why, you would not wish an old soldier like myself to rust here for ever, as his sword is doing in its scabbard over the bookcase there. Come, come, Nell, cheer up, darling; it's not half so bad as you think, and I'll come back in a way you'll be proud of."

"Oh! if you come back at all, Fred; oh, my husband, think of the frightful slaughter that goes on daily."

"It must be put a stop to, Nelly, that's certain; but it wont if we don't all put our shoulders to the wheel; what these brave Turks want are English officers, and now they are finding out their mistake in not getting more of them before. Though, if they were not the most pig-headed, jealous lot in the world, the experiences of Kars and Silistria in the last war ought to have told them that in the beginning; but here, I've got a splendid offer, too good to refuse; the command of a regiment, and if we don't pay off those Russians! so cheer up, old girl, don't be down-hearted. Why, Nell, I thought you were a *pukka* soldier's wife."

"Couldn't I go with you, Fred?" she sobbed; "I would go gladly, I should be much more comfortable; do let me go with

you, I wouldn't mind the bullets a bit, if I could only be near you."

She nearly had all the breath squeezed out of her body with the bear-like hug she got.

"You're a brave little woman, you are, but how would you go? Vivandières are not allowed in Moslem regiments; but joking apart, I don't see how you could go."

"But I could go as far as Constantinople at all events, Fred, and be near you. Fancy, if you got ill or were wounded, and I so far away."

"Umph! I think I should feel more comfortable if you were here."

"But think a little of me, Fred."

"So I do, darling, it is for you I am thinking."

"Then let me go with you as far as Constantinople."

"But Constantinople is a horrid place, a hot-bed of typhus, full of starving refugees, and with a Revolution every other day."

"I don't care, Fred, it is so many miles nearer where you will be, and I don't care for the rest."

"Well, you are a little trump! however, pop on your hat, and let us come over and ask Gracie what she thinks of it."

"I know she will agree with me," said Mrs. Scamperby, as she went out of the room.

Fred looked after her with admiring eyes, and exclaimed,—

"Dashed if she isn't the best little woman that ever breathed!"

Then he got on a chair and took down his old sword, drawing it and looking at it critically from hilt to point, made half a dozen cuts and guards, and then rapidly sheathed it and slipped it into a corner as his wife re-entered the room.

Grace quite sided with her cousin's wife. She declared that their going would be the greatest loss to Paul and herself, and the children would be in despair; but if Fred *would* go, then she quite approved of Ellen going too, as they had no children to think of; it was what she herself would do if Paul were ordered off; even if she had to leave the chicks.

Fred found himself in the minority, and it was settled that his wife should go with him as far as Constantinople; so they packed up what was necessary, closed the house, and started for the East.

One more sketch ere the book is closed and thrown aside.

Above, a cloudless sky bright with a harvest moon and myriad stars, a moon that was glinting through overhanging elms in Devonshire and Surrey lanes, where lovers were strolling arm in arm; or sleeping placidly over Swiss lakes and Venetian canals, or beating through the casemate of an Italian bedroom on some dark-eyed girl, leaning with her elbow on her pillow, as guitar and impassioned voice sent sweet messages of love to be wafted upward on the evening breeze.

Ah! pictures of repose and love, is it only on you the pale moon shines in her calm, still, all-peaceful manner?

We who have passed through scenes of strife and peril will never forget how we have watched that pale orb in the cloudless heaven, and with sickening and foreboding hearts have pictured her shining on tranquil vales at home; so let us now reverse the picture and look.

A battle-field lies before us, the country is undulating, a valley is at our feet, and right and left are heights crowned with grim batteries and lurid camp fires.

The moonbeams play with a ghastly light on heaps of dead and dying—literally heaps—piled three and four deep, not

sparsely scattered and dotted over the slopes, but in broad swathes, as the scythe of the destroying angel laid them low.

In the morning the young hearts filled with reckless daring and faith in their leaders, breasted that fatal hill, only to be swept down by the merciless hail of lead poured from the deadly rifles of the Turks; in the evening the chill dews were stiffening those outstretched arms and pallid faces, whose glassy eyes were staring at that placid moon, who was as calmly shining on the peaceful homesteads of their loved ones in a distant land.

What a contrast!

For hours during that day had the Russians hurled battalion after battalion against their foes, who, self-reliant in their entrenched position, and in the superiority of their weapons, had waited till the Muscovites were well within range, and then simply annihilated them under a withering fire.

Again and again fresh regiments rushed to the attack, but to swell the piles of slain, when at last a wild shout of "Alläh! Alläh-ho! Alläh!" pealed o'er the crash of musketry and the roar of cannon as the Turks, springing from their

entrenchments drove the enemy, panic-stricken down the hill.

None had contributed more to this gallant defence against overwhelming numbers than Fred Scamperby. In many a hard fight he had endeared himself to his men by his courage, and they had amongst themselves given him a pet name signifying the "Iron-heart."

Always in the front, always ready to rough it with his men, denying himself all luxuries save tobacco, and of that he had to put up with queer stuff at times, displaying the most reckless daring, he was the observed of all, not only of his own regiment, but of the Division generally.

There was, however, one man who took a particular interest in the Englishman, and this man himself was an object of comment.

He was not a Turk, nor an Arab; report had it that he was an Indian, and so he was termed by the Turkish soldiery. Being a man of some position, he was dubbed a Pasha, though he had no rank whatever in the army, but seemed to attach himself to the commander-in-chief, who, whether he knew his history or not, paid him a certain amount of deference. He was, apparently, a man of about sixty,

tall and gaunt, with a long white beard, fine features, and eagle eyes.

He seldom spoke to any one, and then in the fewest possible words, and he generally kept with the staff till some momentous crisis was about to occur, when, like a stormy petrel he would appear in the thick of the fight, and his cry of "Allah! Allah-ho! Akbar!" would raise a responsive shout that rang to the vaulted heavens above, as the Osmanlis pressed on after him to victory, and victory it invariably was when he led.

But on this fatal afternoon he fell. And so on this calm summer evening, as the moon in her cloudless sky poured her cold beams over a valley yet more horrible and ghastly than that of Ezekiel's vision, the light of a flickering lamp in a small canvas tent showed two men, one lying bathed in the crimson life-stream that was slowly soaking into the many bandages in which he was swathed; the other, kneeling beside him and holding his hand, listening attentively to the low tones that dropped from the sufferer's lips.

Outside a group of anxious sympathizers, forgetting for once the apathy of the Turk, waited for news, for the wounded man had



sent a message to the English colonel and had then requested to be left alone with him.

As Fred entered the tent, he saw that it was the old Hindostani who had sent for him, and knowing the man's reckless bravery, his heart warmed towards him as he threw himself on his knees beside the heap of straw with a blanket cast over it that formed his bed.

Addressing him in his own tongue, the Englishman expressed his sorrow at seeing him thus sorely wounded; but the old man grasping his hand nervously with one of his own, raised the other as if to command silence, and then in the purest English, said, though almost in a whisper,—

“ You do not know me, yet you ought.”

“ How so ? ” exclaimed Fred, at the same time startled by a vague resemblance that struck him, and a notion that he had seen the man before and had heard the tones of his voice.

“ I am much changed, it is the will of God, but you see I know you, Colonel Scamperby; I am, or rather was, the Nawab Syed Hyder Ali.”

“ Good heavens ! Hyder Ali ? ” cried his listener, struck with astonishment.

“ The same man ; now listen, I have not

long to live and I have much to say; come nearer to me, for then I have not to speak so loud, and I am weak."

Fred knelt and bent over him.

"Who I was, and what were my ambitious designs, it matters not to any one now. At one time I believed that

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
That, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

(The Englishman marvelled at this man, an Oriental, quoting Shakespeare on his death-bed.)

"However, I ever found that tide a treacherous one, in the moment of success it invariably ebbed and left me stranded. From boyhood I was ambitious; I possessed myself of all the learning I could get, both western and eastern. I saw as a mere youth how to lead the fanatical and credulous of my own people; it was imposition it is true, but I became a leader of men, ay, men as earnest and devoted as these around us, before I was out of my teens; but I could not command success; I imagined myself a patriot; I always did and always do repudiate the epithet of rebel and mutineer; I swore no allegiance to the British Government, who had

usurped the country of my forefathers. I did not consider myself bound to any degree of fealty to them, I was not even born under the shadow of the British flag; the Emperor of Delhi was my king, the king of my ancestors, and I felt myself imbued with the highest feelings of patriotism when I devoted my life to his cause. I did my best to win over the soldiery; for the atrocities that were committed by them, I now feel regret—deeds which I never shared in nor sanctioned, but which were unavoidable in a war of the kind. Look at what has been going on around us for months! has not Bulgaria seen worse horrors than Hindustân? but forgive me, I know this is a sore subject; there is, however, no blood of Englishwoman or child on my hands, remember that. At the proper time I went to England; the Russian war was then going on in the Crimea; I was then a Russian at heart—now I hate them. I travelled; I visited Russia and the seat of war; I knew little of the prowess of your soldiers; I saw them shivering, ill-clad and ill-fed, in the trenches, and I despised them. I threw myself into the hands of Russian

agents, who promised liberally, as they always do, and the revolution in India was to be the breaking up of the English Power. The Russians failed me, as they fail every one who trusts in them, and I have lived long enough to thank God that the British still rule over India. Defeated at every turn, broken in health and in spirits, my only hope was to escape somehow to Mecca, when you captured me at Selari. I deserved a drum-head court-marshal and a speedy execution—and a year before would have had it; but the country was now more firmly than ever in the power of the British, and the English sense of fair play had succeeded the frantic cry for vengeance; you know I was fairly tried, but you do not know why it was I steadfastly denied my identity, when it would have been manifestly for my good to acknowledge it. It was pride; I was willing to be condemned for my deeds, I was willing to be executed even, but not as Syed Hyder Ali.”

Here the speaker fell back exhausted, and Scamperby was about to call for the doctor, when the Nawab clutched him eagerly and stopped him.

“Give me something to drink,” he whispered faintly.

Fred poured out some sherbet into a glass and held it to his lips.

After a few minutes Hyder Ali went on,—

“If I were standing well and sound before you, I daresay you would in your English pride strike me to the ground for what I am about to say, but you listen to the last words of a dying man, so listen with patience and forgiveness in your heart; why was it that I as Hyder Ali shrank from the ignominy of penal servitude or death? was it entirely from pride of what I was and had been? not entirely; the praise or blame of the world had well-nigh ceased to affect me, but it was the deep love for a woman, and that an Englishwoman! Nay, start not, dying lips are privileged; it was your cousin Lady Stanford, whose opinion I valued above that of the rest of the world. I had sued her when in my power as a prince, I could not bear that she should think of me toiling as a felon, and this closed my lips, and I owe it to her that I was not discovered. When my counsel told me that Sir Paul Stanford had written that

the portrait was destroyed, I felt sure in my own mind that she had done it in gratitude for my having spared her husband. Was it not so?"

"It was," replied the Englishman.

"I knew it, I felt it; the coming of that portrait I looked upon as Nemesis, but when after three months the answer came, I felt that it had been destroyed out of pity for me; I had no reason for arriving at such a supposition, but something in my inmost heart told me so, and I was right. I had money; the British are not mean, and what wealth I had I took with me. I visited Mecca and lived a while in Egypt, and at last settled in Constantinople. Then these troubles broke out, and it was with eagerness to avenge myself on Russia that I joined the brave army of the Sultan. Allah has called me away! blessed be his name! but he has let me have my desires fulfilled; I have fought and have conquered the false-hearted Muscovites, and I have the means of sending a message with my dying breath to those I love and honour. Search in yon valise, and bring me a little tin case. Give me a little more sherbet first. Thank you. Yes, that is

the case; open it at your leisure, it contains all I have left of my property; there is a necklace of pearls such as Empresses might covet; give it to Lady Stanford and the diamond ring to her husband, may they not think unkindly of me, and forgive me all the injury I have done them. He is a good man, and she—well, I hope the angels in Paradise will be like her. I have watched you long. I have admired you. I admired your courage years ago, but I have seen more of it lately. Take an old soldier's last gift, take my sword; think not the worse of it because it has a gold and gemmed hilt, the blade could not be surpassed in old Damascus. It has been drawn against you, but always in fair fight. Now go. May Allah bless you all. Let those who wish to say good-bye to me now come."

"I say, what a long time you have been talking!" said an English doctor somewhat reproachfully to Fred as he came out.

The bright moon seemed blurred and hazy. He dashed his hands across his eyes. Any moon will look dim through tears.

"Yes," he replied, "he had much to

say. It appears I knew him in India, years ago. He would have his say, and I thought it best to indulge him."

"Well, nothing can save him, so if he had anything on his mind, it is as well he got rid of it and died in peace; but he is stronger than I thought."

"I expect he is weak now, you had better go in and see him," said Fred, "I will tell you his story by-and-by."

The doctor went into the tent, followed by one or two of the Turks.

Fred lit a cigar, and pensively walked up and down.

The man had been an old enemy, and at one time he would have cut him down with the greatest satisfaction, but now he was a comrade in arms, and as Fred thought of the gallant style in which he had seen that gaunt, old-looking man leading the battalions into the thick of the carnage, and then of the pathetic way in which he spoke of his ruined aims and his hopeless passion the moon grew dim again, and he puffed more furiously at his cigar.

A figure came out from the tent and looked hastily around.

It was the doctor.



“Anything wanted?” said Scamperby, going up to him.

“Ah! there you are. I was looking for you; he is sinking fast, and wants to see you again.”

Fred entered the tent. The bed was surrounded by sorrowing men who had all respected the brave old stranger. They made way for the Englishman.

“You—have—got—the gift—for her?” whispered the Nawab as Fred bent over him. He nodded and laid his hand on his breast pocket, where the little tin case lay.

A bright smile came over the pallid face.

“My sword—I want it,” he whispered to the doctor.

“Where is his sword?” said the medical man, who was feeling his pulse. “Fetch his sword—quick.”

A bystander brought it; and Hyder Ali, raising himself with an effort, held it out to Fred, stretching out his right hand, which the other grasped.

A momentary grip and he fell back.

He was dead!

FINIS.

1

2



Vertical line of text or markings on the left side of the page.



